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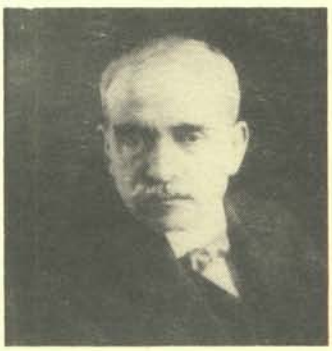

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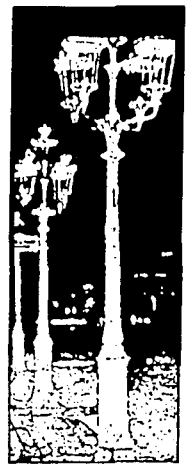

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Out of My Mind

Breaking in at *The New Yorker*

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

In the fall of 1960—I was not yet thirty—I returned to the United States after having spent a year doing research in physics in France on a National Science Foundation Fellowship. I had never held what might be described as a real job. Instead I had had a wonderful series of year-by-year appointments, first at the Harvard Cyclotron Laboratory and then at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. At all of these places—including Paris—I had no responsibility except to do research in theoretical physics and, indeed, no desire to do anything else. I had spent the summer before coming back to this country on the island of Corsica, teaching physics to Parisians. The summer school was located on a beach near the town of Cargèse. It was all very romantic and rather crazy.

But it had come to an end, and now I was about to enter a two-year arrangement with the Brookhaven National Laboratory, located in the flatlands of eastern Long Island, again doing a research job. After Corsica, Brookhaven was, to put it mildly, a considerable shock. It had begun its existence not as a lab but as a military camp—the Camp Yaphank of Irving Berlin's song. Indeed, as late as 1960, there were still military barracks on the reservation that bore faded signs reading "For Officers Only." I lived in such a barrack. The complex as a whole was surrounded by a barbed-wire fence and was guarded—as much to keep people from wandering in and getting electrocuted by the scientific equipment as anything else. While the science was excellent, the life—especially after a year in France—was very dreary.

During the day I worked away at my physics, and in the evenings, inspired partly by a collection of records of French popular singers such as Juliet Grecco, I began to write. Although I had never written professionally or, indeed, taken a writing course, writing had always been a sort of hobby of mine. But by this time it had degenerated from the odd short story or poem to jotting down, in a small notebook, observations like, "She walked across the room wearing her wedding ring like a shield." To pass the time I determined that I would give myself a real writing task, and I decided that I would write about what I had most on my mind, which was France, and above all, Corsica. Having been a *New Yorker* reader for most of my adult life, I quite deliberately set out to write—in *New Yorker* style—what I called "A Letter from Corsica." It took about two weeks, as I recall, to produce this document. The question then became what, if anything, to do with it.

I showed it to two or three people at the Laboratory, among them the late Sam Goudsmit, who was, as far as I know, the first physicist to have been the subject of a *New Yorker* profile. It was written by Daniel Lang and dealt mostly with some of the colorful aspects of Goudsmit's life. He had, among other things, led a mission just behind the advancing armies on the European continent to learn how far the Germans had gotten with their project to build an atomic bomb. Goudsmit had been born in Holland and knew all of the German physicists personally. The mission, which was called *Alsos* (Greek for *Groves*, after the general who commanded our atomic bomb program), discovered that the Germans had gotten almost nowhere. In any event, after reading my "Letter," Goudsmit encouraged me to send it to *The New Yorker*, which I did in a laboratory envelope with a "Dear Sirs" covering letter. I knew no

✪ JEREMY BERNSTEIN's autobiographical memoir *The Life It Brings* will be published by Ticknor & Fields this spring.

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one at the magazine and did not have the foggiest notion who the editor was. I sent off my envelope, put the matter out of my mind, and went back to doing physics.

This occurred in October. The following March I was scheduled to return to Europe to finish up my fellowship. I had heard nothing from the magazine, not even a card acknowledging that the manuscript had been received. I had, more or less, forgotten about it but decided that, out of curiosity, I would call them to see if it had actually been received. I explained my concern to a telephone operator at the magazine who, no doubt, had heard it all before—many times. She switched me to someone—male—to whom I once again explained my problem. He had, he said, no recollection of my manuscript, but would look into the matter. He added, casually, "We lose a lot of manuscripts around here," something, which I can assure the readers of these words, is a canard. I was told that this search might take a few days and that I should call back. I did so a few days later and once again repeated my story to the same man. "Oh," he said, "you are 'fact.' This is 'fiction.'"

My call was now switched to a new person—female—with an immensely sophisticated voice, I might add. No sooner did I give my name than she said, "Oh, you must be back from Corsica." I noted that I had been back from Corsica for more than six months, but it was clear from the fact that she knew who I was that something must be happening. Indeed, my manuscript had arrived some months before and had begun the process of readings by which the dozens—hundreds—of manuscripts that arrive at *The New Yorker* each week are sorted out. All are read and nearly all are returned. By March, mine had arrived in the office of Edith Oliver. Miss Oliver is known to *New Yorker* readers as its Off-Broadway theater critic, but, in fact, she fills innumerable roles at the magazine and at that time was acting, I gather, as a kind of final filter for unsolicited fact manuscripts. Her office is just down the hall from that of William Shawn—the then, and current, editor of *The New Yorker*.

Now, at the very time Miss Oliver was mulling over my manuscript, Mr. Shawn came into her office for a chat. I have never asked him exactly what specific event in physics had caught his attention, but he said to her that there seemed to be this very interesting activity in physics but that there didn't seem to be anyone around who could write about it in a way he would like to publish. There had been next to no science writing in *The New Yorker*. The few things that had been published, such as Daniel Lang's profiles and Laura Fermi's *Atoms in the Family*, about Los Alamos, did not really attempt to explain the science but, rather, focused on the personalities of the scientists. The problem was to do both. Miss Oliver, I am told, held up my unsolicited, badly typed, several-month-old manuscript and said, "I think I may have found the solution to your problem." I was, at this very time, no doubt, in my office at Brookhaven engaged in some sort of calculation, totally unaware that Mr. Shawn *had* a problem to which I might be the solution.

The sophisticated "fact" voice said that, indeed, my manuscript was safe and sound and that I would be hearing from the magazine shortly. A few days later the phone in my office rang, and a somewhat timorous voice asked if I was Mr. Bernstein. I said I was. He said, "This is William Shawn of *The New Yorker*. Do I catch you at an opportune time?" This is the twenty-fifth year I have written for *The New Yorker*. I do not know how many such phone calls I have received from Mr. Shawn during that quarter of a century—many of them desperately important to me, involving the acceptance or rejection of weeks, or months, of work—and in each one he has asked me if he has caught me at an opportune time. In any event, he went on to say that he had read my manuscript and that if it was "agreeable" with me he would like to publish it. I said that it was agreeable. I think that is what I said. I was in such a daze that God knows what I said. I do remember his asking if I could come in to New York to see him. We made a date, and I hung up in a kind of fog. What I could not foresee was that this phone call would completely transform my life.

A few days later I made my first visit to *The New Yorker* offices on Forty-third Street. I don't know exactly what I expected. They had, and still do have, the slightly run-down look of a college English department. They conform to a theorem that seems to hold for nearly all physics departments—namely, their quality varies inversely with the quality of the surroundings in which they find themselves. I

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was, on my first visit, pointed in the general direction of Mr. Shawn's office and then ushered into it. Like the offices themselves, Mr. Shawn is, at least in appearance, not the slightest bit chichi. He is short, slight, and largely bereft of hair. He is now seventy-nine. (In the first years I knew him, he seemed to have almost total recall. I remember once having lunch with him at the Hotel Algonquin, which is a stone's throw from the magazine, and bringing up some matter that I thought might require his attention. He took from his pocket a rectangular white card that seemed to have on it a couple hundred minuscule notations. He added mine to the list.) In a quiet, careful voice, at this first meeting, he invited me to sit down on a couch near his desk for a few minutes while he attended to the magazine's business. He was extremely apologetic for the delay and offered me a wide variety of reading matter, which I declined. I was much more interested in studying what was on top of his desk—a remarkable array of papers, letters, manuscripts, and something that seemed like a small-scale model of an oil well. Perhaps it was a silo. The main impression the whole thing made on me was one of calm and order. One of my colleagues once remarked that, if there were a benign principle governing the universe, he—or it—would very likely resemble Mr. Shawn.

In due course he finished the magazine's business and turned to mine. We began what seemed like a casual conversation about what I did. I am not sure that he had ever met a physicist. I explained my job, and then he asked me about various physicists, such as Oppenheimer, whom he was curious about. There was no question that this was some kind of interview, and surely what he must have had in mind was whether I had the makings of a useful writer or whether my "Letter from Corsica" was some sort of freak—a sport. It didn't seem like an interview. I talked on and on for more than an hour. (Later on—much later—I realized that this was, for him, an eternity. In some years we would settle a year's worth of writing projects in five minutes.) In the end he said that he thought I could write for the magazine. He explained that the one kind of science writing he had not seen—the one that would interest him the most—was writing about science as a form of experience, both my own experience and the experience of people I knew. This was in 1961, and at that time the kind of personal science writing that is now so commonplace was essentially nonexistent. He gave me no assignment and no instructions as to how I might go about the work. There was no commitment on either side—just a mutual expression of interest. I went back to the laboratory in a daze.

As anyone knows who has tried it, there is nothing more difficult than making the transition from being an amateur at something to becoming a professional. I have heard every stripe of amateur writer talking about how much they "love" to write. I have never heard a professional writer say he or she "loves" to write. A professional writer is able to produce time after time, day after day, pieces of writing someone will pay real money for—writing that someone *must* buy if the writer is to survive. In my own case I had—and thank God still have—another profession. Indeed, I returned to Brookhaven to practice it. However, I now walked around the laboratory like Clark Kent. On the outside I might have looked like a mild-mannered physicist, but on the inside I was a *writer!* I went around writing about things and, what was even worse, looking for things to write about. It was all very self-conscious, and the writing it produced was terrible. It lacked just what had, I think, attracted Mr. Shawn to my "Letter from Corsica" in the first place—spontaneity, a complete lack of conscious style. I showed Mr. Shawn various of these creations, all of which—needless to say—he turned down. This went on for well over a year. Without my physics work I would have starved.

If Mr. Shawn was losing patience with all of this, he never let on. He must have been through it many, many times. He finally broke the logjam by giving me an assignment. He asked me to review a book on extraterrestrial life by two Soviet scientists, the biologist Oparin and the astronomer Fesenkov. The science was very speculative, but, for me, the interest in the book lay in its mixture of science and Soviet propaganda. This was during the Stalin era, and scientists were obliged to lace their presentations with messages from Engels and Lenin. (Things are quite different now in that the Russian scientific journals and texts that we receive routinely in the West are just that—scientific journals and texts with no

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extracurricular Soviet propaganda.) I used the occasion of this book review to write a brief essay pointing out and lamenting the fact that, at that time, Soviet scientific texts were adulterated with propaganda. This was published about the same time my first "Talk of the Town" piece was accepted and published. I will describe that briefly since it was the occasion of the only explicit writing lesson Mr. Shawn ever gave me.

A group of wealthy businessmen had, as I recall, put up enough money to charter an airplane to bring to this country the best European tennis players to play in the championships at Forest Hills. This was an event because, until then, very few European players could afford to play here. The game was, it may be recalled, still ostensibly an amateur activity. I was, at the time, very much interested in tennis and heard that a boat trip around Manhattan had been arranged for the tennis players. I got myself invited with the intention of writing a "Talk of the Town" about that. I discussed it with Mr. Shawn. He liked the idea. I told him that I had never done that kind of journalism before and asked if he had any advice. He said, "Mr. Bernstein, I think you should keep moving around a good deal." That was it. Upon reflection I decided that what it really meant was that either I could do the work or I couldn't, and if I couldn't, no amount of advice was going to make any difference.

These activities, while renewing my confidence as a potential writer, were really peripheral to what Mr. Shawn really wanted—namely, a new kind of scientific profile. We never discussed this in so many words, but it was clear to me that this was the goal. What happened over the next few months was yet another illustration of my favorite Pasteurian dictum of chance favoring the prepared mind. The preparation had actually taken place a few years earlier with what we physicists then called The Glorious Revolution of 1956. It is the closest thing to a real scientific revolution that I have so far witnessed. It had to do with the fact that the symmetry between left- and right-handed descriptions in physics—parity symmetry, which was taken as axiomatic—unexpectedly broke down. This breakdown occurred in what are known as the "weak interactions," which are responsible for the instability of both nuclei and elementary particles. It was entirely unanticipated and is still not understood on the deepest level.

This discovery made the front pages of every newspaper, and it may well have been one of the things that persuaded Mr. Shawn that *The New Yorker* needed a new kind of science writing. To make things even more interesting from a journalistic point of view, the principal theoretical work had been done by two very attractive, very young Chinese-American physicists named Tsung-Dao Lee and Chen Ning Yang. Both men had been born in China and, in 1957, became the first Chinese to win the Nobel Prize. It so happened that the year I was at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton they were there as well. Moreover, we had even had a brief physics collaboration. I certainly didn't know them very well, but I knew them well enough to know how extraordinarily gifted they were and to have a sense of the special intertwining of ancient Chinese culture and modern science that constituted their lives. It was hard to imagine a more perfect profile subject. There was, however, at least as far as I was concerned, a major problem. I simply did not know how to go about asking them if they would permit me to do it.

This may seem bizarre, but remember that I was essentially a postdoctoral student with a limited reputation in physics and none in profile writing. Lee and Yang were at the acme of our profession, and, as far as I could see, they had had all of the public exposure that they wanted. Here the matter stood. Arthur Clarke once said to me that "nothing really bad can ever happen to a writer," meaning that everything is grist for the literary mill. I am not sure if he had in mind the sequence of events that followed.

In the summer of 1961, I went to work at CERN, the huge elementary particle physics laboratory outside Geneva. So did T. D. Lee. I lived in the same apartment house in which Lee and his family lived. While there, I sprained my ankle badly playing tennis, and the Lees offered to help, with T. D. chauffeuring me to the lab and his wife, Jeanette, helping with the shopping. During the several weeks that this went on, I had the chance to ask him a great deal about his life and about the history of the parity discovery. At the end of that month I asked if he would be willing to

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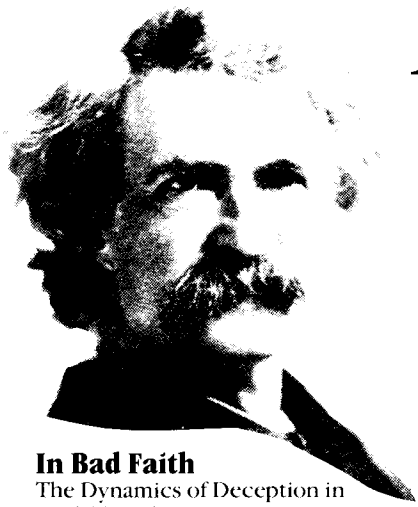

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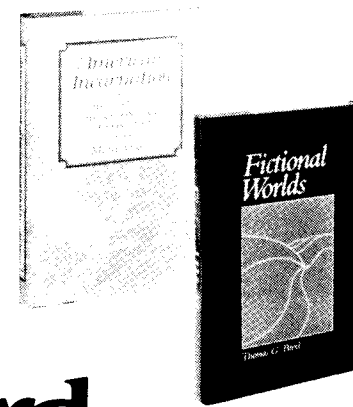

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let me write this up as a *New Yorker* profile. He was concerned about the scientific accuracy and, indeed, the seriousness of such a piece of writing. *The New Yorker* still had the reputation for many people of being a "funny" magazine. I thought we could assure the accuracy if he and Yang were to read it before it was published. I did not realize that this was an unusual procedure for a magazine. In physics it is very common to circulate unpublished papers, partly to claim priority for discoveries and partly to catch mistakes.

I brought this up with Mr. Shawn, explaining Lee and Yang's concern about accuracy and pointing out that, obviously, they knew much more about their physics than I did; we could not, in short, have a better way of checking the material. The usual way would be to have a non-physicist fact checker read sentences to Lee or Yang, and then report to me what they had said, which seemed to me to be a very inefficient procedure. Mr. Shawn agreed to my arrangement, explaining that, of course, the magazine would have the final editorial say over what was, or was not, printed. In many of the profiles I have written since, I have followed this same procedure. I believe it has deepened and strengthened these pieces of writing, but, as I will illustrate, it has also created some problems for me.

In any event, after my summer in Geneva, I returned to Brookhaven and wrote the profile of Lee and Yang and the discovery of parity non-conservation. From *The New Yorker* point of view, it was a completely unconventional document. It was, by far, the most technical scientific piece of writing the magazine had ever accepted. It was also relatively impersonal. This was deliberate on my part and reflected the sense of respect I had for the two men. In a note that Shawn wrote to me in January 1962, he commented, "Well, piece could certainly stand a little more on the personal lives of the two men, and what they are like. But perhaps there is a good reason to keep it as impersonal and rarefied as it is. At any rate, we can discuss." When I went to see him, I found my piece literally strewn over the floor of his office. He likes to edit new writers and especially someone like me who had had no professional writing background. (He was also editing Ved Metha, who had just arrived at the magazine, along with Calvin Trillin, John McPhee, Renata Adler, and Susan Sheehan—a whole new generation.) He explained to me that he was rearranging the order of the piece by physically moving the pages around. Looking at the process, I felt roughly the way a patient, under local anesthesia, feels while watching surgeons operate on him.

When the piece was rearranged, we got down to discussing specific word changes. One moment stands out. I had used the phrase "the dialogue between theory and experiment." He objected to the use of the word *dialogue* this way, noting that everyone was now using it like this—"Even the Kennedys," he added. I proposed *colloquy*, which he said was acceptable. He then gave me a written set of comments about the piece, including a few general remarks on his notion of how to construct a *New Yorker* profile. Among other things, he wrote, "We think a factual piece should be . . . built from the ground up, brick by brick, layer by layer . . . with the abstractions coming *after* the detailed foundation work." He added, "Our feeling is that in factual writing (though often not in fiction) indirection should be avoided, for the sake of clarity, grace, structural strength, and so on. We believe in not backing into things." I have done my best to follow this advice ever since.

The profile of Lee and Yang eventually appeared in its final and still rather austere form. It was very widely read, and what I especially treasured were the indications of approval by my physicist colleagues—a very tough audience. It should have been a joyous event, but it wasn't. I have never discussed this publicly, but now both Lee and Yang have, so I will say a few words about it. The profile had been sent to them to read before publication. It was returned to Mr. Shawn. Upon reading it, he called me to ask if I understood some of the changes. What had struck him was that while I had used—the common scientific courtesy—the alphabetical order "Lee and Yang," it had been changed about half the time to "Yang and Lee." He asked if I understood why. I did not have a clue. It turned out that this was the tip of an iceberg that almost no one knew existed. To most physicists it seemed as if these two scientific geniuses had developed an almost perfect collaboration—a very rare thing in science. None of us knew of the strains that

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there were in this union, and my profile was the occasion of releasing them. I am not sure what would have happened if I hadn't written my profile, but it is my belief that what happened would have happened anyway. The two men never collaborated again, never really spoke to each other again. When I understood what had happened, I was horrified. I felt absolutely terrible. I had done something with the best of all possible intentions, and it had turned into a tragedy—a nightmare. I came very close to giving up writing. I certainly had no intention of writing any more profiles of my scientific contemporaries and, in fact, did not do so for some ten years.

After the Lee and Yang profile, Mr. Shawn made me an official staff member—a staff writer—for the magazine. This is a curious arrangement that, at least in my case, obliges me to do nothing beyond my "best efforts" and obliges the magazine to do nothing except pay me at certain rates if these efforts prove successful. It also entitles me to the wonderful medical policy *The New Yorker* provides gratis to the staff. Mr. Shawn did not suggest any further topics for writing. Indeed, one of the reasons, I think, why many young people founder at *The New Yorker* is because there are so few instructions. People are expected to produce their own ideas. Apart from not writing any more profiles about living physicists, I had no ideas.

By this time I had left Brookhaven and moved into New York, where I took up a teaching position at New York University. Once again I returned to doing physics. To explain what happened next I must remind the reader that in the early 1960s, when this was happening, ordinary citizens were just beginning to learn to program large computers. It would be at least a decade before ordinary citizens *had* computers. There were, however, computer centers that were giving courses in such programming languages as FORTRAN. Indeed, my colleague Gerald Feinberg, a physics professor at Columbia, had taken such a course, and he remarked that it was so simple that I might be able to learn it as well. I then enrolled in a similar course at New York University. After a few sessions I got the idea of doing what *The New Yorker* calls a "casual"—a brief, often funny piece about nearly anything. My idea was based on the proportionality "Berlitz is to Swedish as this course is to FORTRAN." I thought that I would write about some of the funny interactions I was having with the machine. These things were still pretty novel. It did not occur to me to try to write about the workings of the machine itself any more than, if I were going to write about learning Swedish at Berlitz, I would have, necessarily, included a Chomskian analysis of the human language faculty. I mentioned this idea to Mr. Shawn who remarked, cryptically, that it looked to him like a possible "beginning." A beginning of what?

After a few days in the course I realized that without some understanding of the machine, one could not understand what the machine was saying, and why. I tried to find a semipopular book that explained computers, and, much to my surprise, there wasn't one.

This may seem difficult to believe in 1986, but I am talking about the early 1960s. I then decided to learn about the machines with the idea of, somewhere down the line, writing a profile of the computer. This turned out to be an immensely complicated project that took me more than a year.

One complication is rather interesting. There were not many computer manufacturers in those days. IBM, which had resisted involvement with the computer in the beginning, was the principal manufacturer, along with Sperry-Rand, RCA, and a few others. In the course of my research, I called all of them. The only company that would talk to me was IBM. The others said that the only people who would talk to me were in their legal departments. The whole field, I learned, was in litigation. Among other things there was a legal hassle involving who had actually invented the electronic digital computer. This was finally decided in October 1973 in favor of a man called John Vincent Atanasoff. I do not believe anyone I interviewed mentioned Mr. Atanasoff, and he does not appear in my profile. However, IBM had the idea that public education about computers would ease their acceptance and, of course, encourage their use. I don't use the word *sales* here, since IBM had the second shrewd idea of only renting its equipment. When I first called IBM, they were also reluctant to deal with me on the grounds that *The New Yorker* was a "funny" magazine and that I would write yet another satire on the computer—which had, incidentally, been my original intention.

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Now, however, I pointed out that I was a professor of theoretical physics—not a notably comedic line—and their attitude changed dramatically. They must have decided that I was a suitable vehicle to use to explain computing machines to the public at large, because they more or less opened the company up to me. I went everywhere and saw everyone I wanted to see. This resulted in a two-part *New Yorker* profile—and, incidentally, my first book—both of which I called *The Analytical Engine.* This was the name given to the first scheme for a comprehensive computing engine, which was designed by the British polymath Charles Babbage in the nineteenth century. The machine was never built despite the efforts of Babbage and Lady Lovelace, the only daughter of Lord Byron.

I do not intend to give a blow-by-blow description of all of the *New Yorker* profiles I have written in the last twenty-five years, but three more examples may be illustrative. About the time I was writing *The Analytical Engine,* I, or Mr. Shawn—I no longer remember which of us—got the idea that I might do a piece on science fiction. Unlike many of my scientific colleagues, I did not grow up on science fiction and have rather little taste for it. (It somehow reminds me of how a friend once characterized mixed doubles—as being neither sex nor tennis.) Given this assignment, I consulted my aforementioned colleague Gerald Feinberg, who *is* a real science-fiction maven. If there was one contemporary science-fiction writer I should read, I asked him, who would that be? He answered, without hesitation, "Arthur C. Clarke." Clarke had, at that time, a certain cult following but was not at all well known to the general public. I duly attacked his oeuvre and liked it immensely, especially *Childhood's End,* which I still think is Clarke's finest piece of fiction. I wrote my enthusiastic review, and not long after, a letter arrived from Ceylon—then, as now, Clarke's adopted home. He said that he would be in New York shortly and would like to meet me.

Not long after that he arrived in New York, and we had lunch. This was my first exposure to Clarke. We have now become good friends, and I am quite used to his calling after a hiatus of six months or a year and saying, "This is Arthur . . . ," and then launching into a nonstop monologue on his activities during the past several months, followed by, "All the best," and then hanging up. On this occasion he launched into his monologue, and somewhere along the line I managed to gather that he was working on what he called "The Son of Dr. Strangelove." I was able to stop the flow of conversation long enough to learn that this was a science-fiction film that he was in the process of writing with Stanley Kubrick, the "father" of *Dr. Strangelove.* This, of course, was the script of what eventually became *2001.* I believe the film did not have a title at the time that Clarke and I first talked. At the end of the lunch, Clarke remarked that Kubrick was a remarkable man and that I should meet him. I was delighted with the idea. Kubrick was already one of my heroes. *Dr. Strangelove* is the only film of which I can recall sitting straight through two successive performances.

Kubrick was then living in a large New York apartment. I had never met anyone connected with the movies and did not know what to expect. The apartment was a total chaos of children, books, papers, and radios. Messengers seemed to arrive every three minutes with more papers. Kubrick and I hit it off at once. I recall that my first thought on seeing him was: My God, he is one of us—meaning that he is not a movie mogul but an eccentric physicist. Much later I learned that physics was one of the few subjects that Kubrick had not actually failed in high school. It soon became clear why Kubrick was interested in meeting me. He had read my computer articles and wanted to ask whether his fictional computer HAL violated anything that was then known about computers. (Incidentally, Clarke swears that they did not realize that if one takes the letters *IBM* and shifts each letter back by one it reads *HAL.*) I told Kubrick that from my limited knowledge of the subject his computer seemed all right.

After we had talked for about an hour, I looked at my watch and told Kubrick I had to leave. He wanted to know why, and I explained that I had a date to play chess for money in Washington Square in Greenwich Village. Much to my surprise he asked who I was going to play with. I answered a man named Fred Duval—a Haitian who was a well-known chess hustler in the park and who used to refer to himself as "the master." Kubrick then said, "Duval is a *potzer.*" This led to an epic series of chess games between

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Kubrick and me that lasted during the entire filming of *2001* and that became the centerpiece of the *New Yorker* profile that I eventually wrote about him.

Something occurred after the profile had been written, but before it was published, which, at least in retrospect, was truly marvelous. By this time I was once again spending the summer in Geneva working at CERN. Kubrick was in London, where he had moved and now lives permanently. As had become my custom, I had sent him the proofs of the profile for his corrections. The phone rang in my office. It was Kubrick. He had read the proofs and was very upset by the ending. I could not make much sense of his objections over the phone, but I said I would stop over in London on my way back to New York and we could go over the whole matter, whatever it was, in person.

We met on a Sunday in his office in what were then the MGM studios in Boreham Wood. He explained the problem. The end of the profile is an account of our dramatic twenty-fifth chess game. It was the last game we played. He had faked me out with a remarkable trap into which he had lured me by some histrionics. I had described our mutual reactions to this performance. He said that in doing so I had given myself all the "good" adjectives, leaving him with only "lousy" adjectives. I now forget what the actual adjectives were. But I proposed that we take all the adjectives and put them in a pool and then split them. I would accept a "lousy" adjective for each of his. We actually put the adjectives on slips of paper and divided them. As far as I could see there was no visible change from the original profile, but it seemed to make him happy. When it came out, he told me that he had heard favorably from relatives he had not heard from since childhood.

It was Kubrick who introduced me to the tape recorder. He insisted we use one for the sake of accuracy. He did all of his writing by talking into a tape recorder. I had no tape recorder, so we used his. The first time we used it together he said to it, "I feel inhibited talking into a microphone." This struck me as unfortunate since it had been his idea. We soon got over this phase, and I have made heavy use of a tape recorder in all of my subsequent profiles. I discovered from the very first that the real problem with using a tape recorder has nothing to do with "mike fright." Rather it has to do with the difference between the written and spoken word. A coherent interview when played back on one's tape recorder often sounds so good that one is almost embarrassed to take money from anyone for writing it up as an article. I got over this feeling when I first had the tapes transcribed. When one reads the written version, one's heart sinks. Those conversational moments one thought were so wonderful are reduced to written indications in the transcription, such as *Laughter* or *Murmurs of Assent* or what have you. In going from the spoken to the written word, one has lost a dimension. The transcriptions, however precise, are almost unreadable. One must then re-inflate them so that they become workable, three-dimensional objects. This takes as much skill as any other kind of writing. But if it works, one can bring the person one is writing about to life and give the illusion that the reader is listening in to a conversation in progress.

It is perhaps clear from the foregoing that, to make a profile something more than a routine interview, an extra ingredient is required. It is something that the Germans might call a "witz." The dictionary definition of a *witz* is a "joke," but that does not really do justice to the idea. It is not precisely a "gimmick" either. It is somewhere between a gimmick and a joke—a witty idea. Without that I would not know how to begin writing a profile. In what I have described so far, the mixture of traditional Chinese culture and modern physics was the "witz" in the profile of Lee and Yang, and chess was what gave the profile of Kubrick an unexpected dimension. I will conclude with two final examples of the "witz."

After my profile of Kubrick appeared, I ran into Clarke, who commented that it was now time that I did a profile of *him*. This was also an idea that had occurred to me independently. The trouble was the "witz." This was aggravated by the fact that I had written some things about Clarke in my profile of Kubrick. They were, after all, collaborating. I stewed over the idea for a while, and then it occurred to me that the essential ingredient was Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Here was this most future-oriented of men living on a beautiful, remote island in the Third World, in an only semi-technological society. What was he do-

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ing there, and what was his life there? I went to Mr. Shawn with these questions and with the suggestion that he send me to Ceylon. This, in fact, he did.

Before going, I read as much about the place as I could. From my reading I decided that it was essential that I climb Adam's Peak, a rocky summit in the middle of the island from which, it is claimed locally, Adam ascended to paradise. There is a "footprint" in a stone at the top that is said to belong to Adam himself. The mountain, I learned, is a place of pilgrimage—like Fujiyama to the Japanese—and I decided that I needed to climb it. Upon arriving in Ceylon I put the matter to Clarke, who told me, more or less, that I was crazy. He is a water person, and one of the reasons he lives there is because the island offers some of the best underwater exploration in the world. Indeed, at that time, Clarke had written as much about undersea adventure as about science and science fiction. He was even running a small diving business. I, however, was determined to carry on with the climb, and, in the event, Clarke joined me, along with his diving partner Hector Ekkanayake, who was living in the sprawling Clarke manse, along with a large retinue of servants and others, most of whom, like Clarke, wore sarongs. The three of us did the climb at night to avoid the heat, walking up, for miles, a seemingly endless illuminated staircase that, from the bottom, appeared to ascend into the heavens. We arrived at the summit at sunrise to find a crowd of pilgrims assembled to watch the sun cast a perfectly pyramidical shadow on the haze beneath the mountain. The whole experience was so eerie and beautiful that Clarke used it—or traces of it—in at least one novel and several short stories, and I used it as the centerpiece of my profile.

The final profile "witz" I would like to describe is that of Albert Einstein. In the early 1970s I was asked to write the *Modern Masters* volume on Einstein. I accepted and then asked Mr. Shawn if he would be interested in looking at the result to see if it would make a suitable *New Yorker* profile. He said he would be interested. This was before the great explosion of Einstein literature that occurred in 1979—the year of the Einstein centenary. There was, however, a substantial Einstein literature, including the book *Einstein: His Life and Times* by my teacher Philipp Frank. I did not see how I was going to get beyond this literature or even how I could put it together in a new way. I was completely stuck. However, I did know Helen Dukas—the late Helen Dukas—who had been Einstein's secretary since the 1920s and had been part of his Princeton household. During the final years of Einstein's life she lived, along with Einstein and his stepdaughter Margot, in the lovely, plain white house that still stands at 110 Mercer Street in Princeton. I thought that if I could visit the house some idea might present itself to get me started.

I wrote to Miss Dukas and asked if I could make such a visit. She said that would be fine, and, in due course, I went to Princeton. The house had the look and feel of something that a European professor would have lived in. On the top floor Einstein had his own apartment. His library was still intact, and one could see the sort of things he liked to read—serious philosophy and essays on music, that kind of thing. It was a very simple and very serene place with a lovely view of a garden from the back windows. I was immensely moved by being there, but, by itself, I did not see how it would lead me into my profile.

Then Miss Dukas asked if I would stay for lunch, and, of course, I accepted. As she went to make the sandwiches, she gave me a book to read. It was called *Einstein on Peace*. It was a book I had not seen. It consisted of letters and speeches Einstein had written on the general subject of peace and war. Most of it seemed pretty uninteresting to me. A particular disappointment was Einstein's brief correspondence with Freud, which seemed both stilted and ordinary. However, buried among the letters were a few that Einstein had written to the queen of Belgium. They stood out like diamonds. They were surprisingly personal and dealt with what appeared to be Einstein's deepest feelings—his frequent expressions of isolation and even alienation from his new American surroundings. He consoled the queen for the loss of her husband, who died in a climbing accident, and he spoke of the hopes he had for some of his new work and, in old age, of his giving up the violin. But the book also made clear how, in a certain sense, these letters led to the beginning of the nuclear age. When war was imminent, the two physicists Leo Szilard and Eugene Wigner

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were worried that the uranium in the Belgian Congo would fall into the hands of the Germans. They knew Einstein had a connection with the queen of Belgium, and they wanted him to write to warn her. It was this idea that evolved finally into their asking him to write his letter to Roosevelt—the letter that began our efforts to make a nuclear weapon. Once I saw these letters and realized what they meant, it became completely clear to me how to organize my profile. It begins and ends with the queen of Belgium.

Recently I realized that this is my twenty-fifth year of writing profiles for *The New Yorker*. Some of what I have learned I have just described. This year I decided to put everything I have learned into writing a profile of myself—at least myself when young—before I was writing profiles. There is a "witz"—but I think I will keep it to myself.

Double Bind

E. B. DE VITO

Life seems to set us tasks
adhering to some law
of the double bind
like spinning gold from straw
while proclaiming it forbidden
to use a crucible
or spindle

like Diaghilev
telling Nijinsky:
"Astonish me"
while viewing him
with sardonic eyes
that denied they still
could be astonished.

"Astonish me," says life
and when we complain
that the tools are hard to find,
adds, "I make the rules.
The advantage
must be mine."

✪ E. B. DE VITO's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker, Saturday Evening Post, Commonweal*, and other magazines.

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The Bore Wars

ARISTIDES

Was it in a book by F. L. Lucas that I read about the eighteenth-century English Duke who, with the brutality of wit not uncommon to his century, used to organize a dinner to which he would invite everyone he knew who had a stutter, stammer, or other speech impediment? Seated at the head of his own table, the Duke would casually toss out a largish general question to his guests, then sit back to enjoy the halting, dithering, sputtering, expectorating responses. An amiable fellow, the Duke, you will agree, and a man who, to have invented so vicious a form of entertainment for himself, must have suffered greatly from boredom. Let us hope he is now in a place where the extreme heat takes his mind off the discomfort of his boredom.

Yet, given the Duke's resources and his taste for delight at the prospect provided by his guests in pain, I wonder if he would not have done better instead to have organized a dinner for the most brilliant talkers of his time, and sat back to watch them suffer in one another's presence. Imagine them there assembled at one table—Voltaire, Samuel Johnson, Madame de Staël, Lord Chesterfield, the Duc de Saint-Simon, Edmund Burke—each utterly fluent, dazzling in his or her own line, a conversational superstar. Gathered together round that table, however, what a mêlée would result: Voltaire trying to maintain a steady stream of elegant outrageousness, Johnson firing off his sonorous put-downs, Mme de Staël rattling away about her beloved and quite ungrateful daughter, Chesterfield and the little Duc falling all over each other in the attempt to achieve a superiority of decorum, Burke trotting out his astonishingly elaborate metaphors. With all that brilliance packed into one room, there could scarcely be sufficient mental oxygen to go round; intellectually, one would be gasping for breath. Competition would doubtless have sent the volume all the way up. Bedlamic, absolutely bedlamic would be the spectacle set out before the mischievious Duke, who could not fail to delight in it hugely.

Yet even if one could be alone with any of these great talkers, how much of any one of them could one take? A weekend of Voltaire's unrelenting cleverness might just make one long for the blatant attractions of, say, Thanksgiving in Acapulco. Four hours in the company of Edmund Burke might fire up one's appetite for the laconic inarticulateness of the later Mayor Richard Daley. Every great talker carries the seeds, not of his own destruction, but of his ability to bore. Great talkers there have always been, but how many great listeners can you name? Apart from James Boswell, I can think of only one other, the Bloomsbury writer Desmond MacCarthy, whom Max Beerbohm once described as being a splendid conversationalist because he always used those lovely words, "Please tell me."

"Please tell me" are delightful words to hear, for they are of course an invitation to speak, and one is rarely bored when allowed to do the talking. I was once invited to lunch with a very wealthy man, who, after we were seated with a great flurry of attention on the part of the servants at his club, asked me my age. I was then thirty-nine and told him so. "I," he said, "am seventy-three, and therefore much older than you, and since I have less long to live, I shall do most of the talking." That seemed to me, if not quite reasonable, at least fair, and I did most of the listening throughout a long and sumptuous lunch. Not everything he said was interesting—What was it Sydney Smith said of Macaulay, "He has occasional flashes of silence, that make his conversation perfectly delightful"?—but as I listened to him I thought, I have heard the

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phrase "money talks" all my life, and here I am actually listening to money talk. And money, as I say, on this occasion talked fairly interestingly.

I go to lunch at least once, sometimes twice a year with a man with whom the question of interest never arises—at least for me it doesn't. How I got myself into these lunches is too elaborate a story to go into here, but I believe I shall never get out of them until one of us dies. He pursues me with occasional postcards, seasonal greeting cards, and then one day that telephone call comes inviting me to lunch. I put him off for as long as possible ("The next month looks pretty bad for me"), but he is patient ("How does the first week of the following month look?"). As I recount this, you will doubtless think me cold if not cruel. This man longs for my company, my conversational charms obviously please him, his great regard for me cannot imply other than a high compliment. None, as they say on the multiple-choice tests, of the above is true.

When we go to lunch, he does the talking—all of it. His subject is himself, his exploits, his gripes, his grievances, his superior rectitude. Every fifteen minutes or so, I drop in a question, though none is really needed. I fight to keep the glaze from my eyes, the sag from my facial muscles, my hands from drumming impatiently upon the table. Once, to keep consciousness, I counted the words I used while in his company for roughly ninety minutes; the sum was three hundred and forty-eight, including salutations and excusing myself once to go off to the men's room, where I balmed my face with cold water lest I fall asleep. I have heard most of his stories three or four times by now. I try to let my mind drift off while keeping my eyes on him. It doesn't work for long. When we finally part, he appears to have enjoyed himself greatly. "Stay in touch," he calls as I drive off, fatigued yet immensely relieved at being off the hook for six or seven months.

Am I not afraid of his reading this? I shouldn't want him to do so, but I think the chances are very slight. Although we have been going to lunch like this together for roughly seven years, he knows almost nothing about me, apart from the fact that I am married and that I do a little writing. Certainly, he has no notion of my connection with this magazine. If you asked him if I had children, if you asked him how I earn my income, if you asked him what my dreams are, he could not tell you. How could he—he has never asked. I am to him an ear with legs, a breathing microphone into which he opinionates, expiates, and divagates. I assume he must have other walking ears and breathing microphones with whom he also makes lunch and dinner dates, to whom he tells the same stories, of whom he asks no questions.

Why do I continue to go with him for these excruciatingly boring lunches? ("Hey," I hear a raucous voice call out, "you're really sick, fella, you know that?") I go in part because, short of moving to another city, I know no gentle way of putting him off; and I go in part because, knowing him to be fifteen or so years older than I and someone who lives alone, I do not want to hurt his feelings by refusing. ("You're a real sensitive guy," the same voice cries out, "sure ya are, baby.") More to the point, when I think of him I also think of a then young man, the hairdresser of a woman I know, whom I interviewed for an article I wrote years ago on the subject of homosexuality. This young man was self-advertised as wildly promiscuous. "You know," I recall him telling me, "sometimes I'll be in the baths, and for no reason I'll just give myself to some poor old queen. Do you suppose I figure that someday maybe I'll be that poor old queen and some delectable thing like myself will offer himself to me?" The analogy ought to be plain enough: do I see myself as one day being an old bore who is himself sadly in need of somebody to talk at?

The signs of my encroaching boringness, I fear, are beginning to show up. Where once I used to be content to sit back and listen, I am content to do so no longer. Any occasion on which I do not get in my licks, on which I do not at some point hold forth on one of my subjects, has for me now become a dull evening. If I feel someone else is going on at too great a length, I wait for him or her to make the mistake of taking a longish breath, then cut—sometimes barge—in. I have reached the age where a man has acquired a copious supply of jokes, anecdotes, and apposite quotations. In my own case, I think of these as so many cassettes stored in a filing cabinet in my mind; I can slip one in at a quarter-second's notice. I have begun to re-

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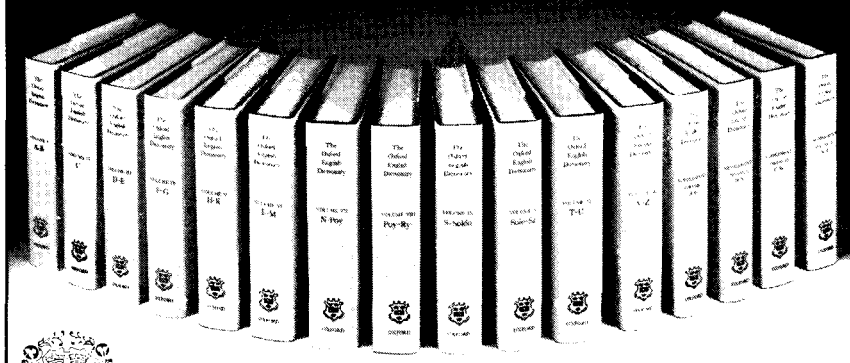

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peat myself. Sometimes it seems to me as if a whole evening has gone by on which I have said nothing fresh; all I have done is play my cassettes through the night. My wife, who has already heard many of these cassettes of mine several times, may soon be described as "long-suffering." Perhaps that time has already arrived. Can one really describe a woman who has had to hear the same anecdotes told, in some instances, ten and fifteen times, and the same jokes told more often than that, can one really describe such a woman as "short-suffering?"

When did it first occur to me that I might have in me the stuff of which serious bores are made? I believe the moment came with the realization that I truly love to talk. I do not think I am an atrocious, or even a poor, listener; still, beginning about seven or eight years ago, I noticed myself increasingly listening for the point at which I might insert one of my cassettes into the conversation. Like a political candidate from a hopelessly obscure right- or left-wing political party, I began to demand, psychologically at least, equal time; and on some occasions I do believe that I have availed myself of rather more than equal time. Do I so wish to talk because I am certain that what I have to say—even if I have said it before—will give pleasure? Or do I wish to talk because it is I who get such a bang out of hearing myself talk?

I do not say that it takes a bore to recognize a bore—if that were so, the punishment would fit the crime with a delightful sense of proportion rarely met with in life—but it may help. As an incipient bore (am I being much too modest here?), I was recently interested to find Edmund Wilson, in the volume of his diaries and journals entitled *The Fifties*, discovering the bore in himself while at the same time struggling in the presence of those whom he found to be boring. On the self-discovery side, Wilson first notes that his wife Elena is much more sensitive than he to other people's conditions and relationships; doubtless this is owing to his not being much of a listener. "Don't talk all the time," he instructs himself. "It is an error to assume that other people can have nothing interesting to say." A pre-cassette man, Wilson writes: "So I sometimes make speeches to people that are merely old phonograph records, with no particular relevance to the person or situation." In London he remarks that Cyril Connolly, "like many wits and raconteurs, never listens to anyone else's sallies or stories"; and he is put off by Isaiah Berlin's exhaustive loquacity: "Once started on a story, he cannot stop giving the whole of his [in this instance Lewis Namier's] career from the beginning, pointed up with anecdotes." In Paris he finds himself irked by the "compulsive monologizing" of a woman named Esther Arthur. As I say, you don't have to be one to know one, but it helps.

Do people with the power to bore ever tire of hearing themselves talk? Even the indefatigable Edmund Wilson, traveling in Europe, allows: "I get rather tired of doing my stuff . . . mentioning the national authors and showing off the little I know about them." As a small bore (sounds rather like a rifle), I must confess that even though I generally find what I have to say fascinating, on occasion I wish that I would shut the hell up. I especially wish for this when, while out of town giving a talk, I appear in my unfamiliar but all-too-comfortable role as general expert. After my talk, people not infrequently come up to me to ask what I think of little things like censorship or higher education or the Cold War. They cannot, of course, know that in doing so they are in effect handing over the key to the wine cellar to the town drunk.

Your genuine bore does not mind repeating himself over and over again—and then just one more time. How many times have I, while removing the cork from a bottle of wine, announced to my company, "I think you will find this wine a bit fey yet not without seriousness, a touch promiscuous yet ultimately responsible." This joke on wine bores is, I am afraid, itself becoming rather boring. I try not to use it before the same people—though my poor suffering wife has had to hear it countless times—yet use it I do when presented with a fresh audience. It usually gets an appreciative (polite?) giggle, so, when my hand slips once more around the neck of yet another bottle of wine, I prepare to press it into service one more time. By now even I begin to grow weary of it; it has become, to adapt a phrase from old-time Communist party argot, "boring from within." It reminds me of a story told by Rayner Heppenstall about Dylan Thomas, who, after having talked endlessly one evening, remarked, "Somebody's boring me. I think it's me."

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But generally every bore feels he has the right to do as much talking as he does by virtue of his being more entertaining, more knowledgeable, or (somehow) more worthy than the company in which he finds himself. Bores are not noted for their insecurity or for suffering powerfully from inferiority complexes, though I suppose it is possible for someone to become boring by insisting, at tedious length, upon his own uninterestingness. Yet a crucial distinction needs to be made between being boring and being uninteresting. Some people can be militantly, profoundly, oppressively uninteresting and can lower the wattage of any room they enter with the shadow cast by their mental torpor. But it is not quite their fault, whereas the act of being truly boring implies something akin to an act of aggression. Your serious bore has no doubts about his interestingness; he badgers, bulls, bores ahead. "Every hero becomes a bore at last," wrote Emerson, but every bore remains a hero to himself.

However certain bores are of the delight and importance inherent in their conversation, even the most confident knows that what he has to say is not of equal interest to everyone. I should have been most hesitant to have trotted out my cassettes before Henry James, Marcel Proust, or George Santayana. Someone I feel confident I could not have interested even for thirty seconds would have been André Malraux. Nothing in my file of cassettes—not any of my anecdotes, jokes, bits of extraneous information—could possibly have been of the slightest interest to Malraux, whose roster of friends and acquaintances included Leon Trotsky, Albert Einstein, Chou En-lai, Nehru, and Charles de Gaulle and whose résumé might have been written in the following single sentence: "See twentieth-century history." "Say Andy," I might open my conversation with him, "have you heard the one about the little fellow from Tel Aviv who knocks on the door of the expensive bordello in Manhattan?" Or I might tell him, a man who flew sixty-five missions in the Spanish Civil War and was decorated by six different governments for his fighting (under the nom de guerre of Colonel Berger) in World War II, of my own army days in the late 1950s as a clerk-typist in Missouri, Texas, and Arkansas. Perhaps he would have been interested in my teaching adventures—kids, after all, do say the darnedest things, you know.

But, were such a meeting ever to have taken place, apparently, from all reports, I need not have worried, for quite likely I should not have gotten a word in edge-, side-, or any other wise. Malraux was a furious, a tireless, I gather a somewhat tyrannical talker—a monologuist of the first magnitude. Janet Flanner has described—without machinery one could not really record—Malraux's conversation:

> Malraux paces the floor as if he were propelled by the jerking energy of his speech. As he walks, words and ideas rush from his brain and out of his mouth in extemporaneous creation, as though they were long quotations from books he has not yet written, and they flow at a rate that is almost the speed of thought, and sometimes faster than the ear can catch. His extravagant memory accompanies him as he paces back and forth, bringing reminiscences out into the air, along with history, art and man's dangerous destiny—whatever he needs at the moment. From time to time, for punctuation, he lifts his right hand, to warn the dazed listener about the paragraph to come, which passes in a revelatory gust.

Malraux's talk was not merely inexhaustible but often unintelligible into the bargain—a winning combination, surely—and not merely to non-French-speaking listeners. In his *Journal*, André Gide noted that Malraux "talks with that extraordinary volubility which makes him so hard for me to follow . . . in awe before his dazzling and staggering flow of words." Whenever he was in Paris, Edmund Wilson would call on Malraux, and, though Wilson writes that "it is always bracing to see him," he also records: "After lunch, when Mme M. and Elena had withdrawn, he sat beside me on the corner of the chair or the desk, talking vehemently into my face." How would you like to be the third party here? Perhaps one could get the floor with an attack of whooping cough ending in a cerebral hemorrhage, but even this is not certain.

Can André Malraux, who lived perhaps as passionately adventurous a life as any in the twentieth century, possibly be counted a bore? Never having met him, I cannot say with certainty, but reading others' accounts of his conversational style one is reminded that somewhere within the word *dazzle* its root, *daze*, is buried. True, one does not think of the French as having a strong tradition of bores. The English and the Germans seem

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stronger in this line. All that is boring tends to be heavy, but German boringness tends to be served with extra scoops of pedanticism and pomposity. So much a fixture of the culture are bores in England—older clergymen, retired colonial administrators, garden-club chairwomen—that the English bore has actually become a stock comic figure. At Oxford, I have been told, there used to be an annual Bores Dinner, to which were invited the most boring men in the university, with the check having to be paid by the man whose guest proved the least boring. Bores in English novels can be delightfully funny: Dickens did fine bores and so did Evelyn Waugh; and Anthony Powell, in his character Kenneth Widmerpool, in *A Dance to the Music of Time*, created a bore of such comic richness that the novel comes most alive when he is on the page. Contemporary American novelists seem to have no interest in creating bores, but then, writing thinly disguised autobiography in their novels as so many of them do, they tend in themselves to supply their own bores.

While some countries produce a rich harvest of bores, other countries seem to have boredom, like nitrogen, in their soil. Poor Canada, for example, is the butt of an old publishing joke about a group of editors who, meeting over drinks, tried to invent a title for the world's most boring-sounding book and came up with *Canada: Sleeping Giant to the North*. Or much of provincial South America, which, in the renderings of its novelists and poets, seems to exist under a miasma of heat, dust, and extreme boredom while awaiting either a knife fight over a woman or a full-blown revolution. Russian life has always contained heavy doses of boredom, especially as portrayed by Chekhov, who set so many of his stories in provincial Russian towns where on still evenings "even the dogs are too bored to bark" and the only notable event occurred when the deacon ate a four-pound jar of caviar. In *Fathers and Sons*, Turgenev writes of the mother of Pavel and Nikolai Kirsanov having actually died of ennui. And it was another Russian writer, Ivan Goncharov, who gave the world the character Oblomov, who suffers from that advanced state of inertia known as Oblomovitis, which is boredom in action (or is it inaction?) when raised to the highest (or is it lowest?) power. Certainly, the Soviet leadership continues to keep the tradition of boredom alive by doing all it can to perpetuate one of the most boring societies in the history of mankind. Boring though Soviet society may be, it nonetheless has created, in my limited experience among Soviet emigrés, some of the liveliest people in the world. Conversely, perhaps it takes a lively society to create serious bores. Just as primitive societies have no knowledge of the concept of vulgarity or poor taste, neither, one gathers, do they have bores. You need to attain a certain level of civilization to develop serious bores.

Some places, I find, aren't quite boring enough, at least for my taste. I find this true of Manhattan, a city that tends to over-stimulate me. While in Manhattan I often feel as if there are vibrators in my shoes, highly percussive symphonies playing in my head, something akin to a moving Hogarth, George Grosz, Reginald Marsh montage playing before my eyes at fast forward. So many people to call upon, things to do, see, eat—no, the problem with Manhattan for me is that it isn't quite boring enough. After all, though they are not manifold, neither are the virtues of boredom non-existent. I am told that Robert Hutchins, when attempting to lure a famous scholar or scientist to the University of Chicago, used a sales pitch that ran roughly along the following lines: "In Chicago, of course, the weather is impossible—blazingly hot in summer, insultingly cold in winter. The cultural life in the city, apart from the Chicago Symphony and the Art Institute, is practically nil. Of serious society, there is little; of the beauty of nature, even less. It's all really quite excruciatingly boring. You must come—you'll find that, with so little else to do, you'll get an immense amount of work accomplished."

Are there particular conditions or occupations in life that help bring out the bore in one? Success can sometimes do it. I have been on the circumference of circles in which it was tacitly yet still perfectly plain that the men or women who had the most money were permitted—not that they ever asked permission—to do all the talking. The assumption here seems to have been that their success in the particular financial or commercial line lent them general authority on, say, the subjects of raising children, foreign policy, and Astro Turf. You can't argue with success, an old saying has it, but that is probably because success, full of self-confidence, will not yield

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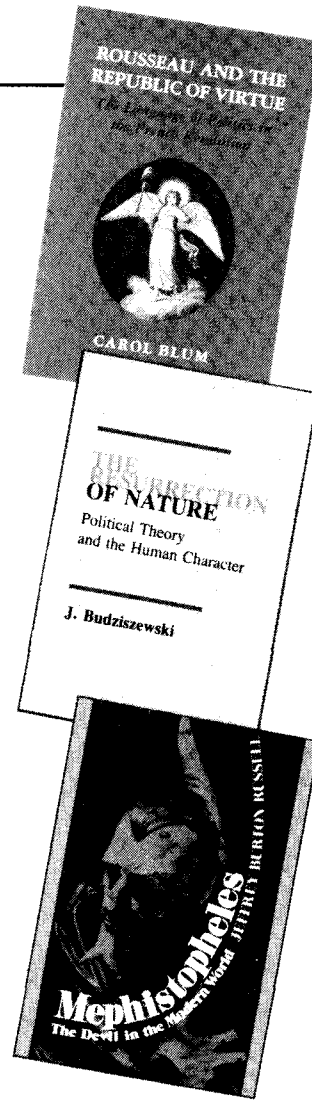

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the floor. Nothing succeeds like success, another old saying has it, but, when the element of perspective is missing, nothing quite bores like success either.

If not from the standpoint of success, my own credentials as a bore seem to me impeccable from the standpoint of occupation. I am a teacher and an intellectual, and neither is a line of work that encourages one to keep one's own counsel. "Too damn wordy," an older friend who was not a famous reader once remarked about his failed attempt to read one of my books, but the remark perhaps applies to my entire life, which is also pretty damn wordy. As a teacher, I am paid to keep the words flowing. Jorge Luis Borges once noted his genuine pleasure at being able to keep a class interested in what he had to say for a full hour—and he was Jorge Luis Borges. I am Aristides, and my classes never run fewer than ninety minutes. Highly bore-able myself, I do not look forward to boring my students. Yet it is difficult to believe that, over the stretch of an academic quarter, I can keep them intellectually alert for the roughly one thousand eight hundred minutes that they spend with me, during which I (having less long to live, not to speak of the power of grading) do most of the talking. Some of my fellow teachers teach with the doors to their classrooms open, and often, as I walk by, I look in, noting the sunken cheeks, the slack jaws, the lightly glazed eyes of students in their struggle with somnolence. It is a war out there, man, a bore war, and there's one thing you might as well face right now: you have to be either bored or boring, and you'll eventually have to choose sides. As Byron quite correctly put it: "Society is now one polish'd horde / Form'd of two mighty tribes, the *Bores* and the *Bored.*"

Herewith an axiom from the physics of pedagogy: gas expands to fill time. When I began teaching I worried gravely about being able to fill a fifty-minute class; now, a decade or so later, I have been known to run over when teaching a two-and-a-half-hour class. Whence did this extra steam and stamina derive? From my own ever-expanding wisdom and ever-increasing powers of intellectual penetration? How nice to be able to think so, which I for a moment don't. More likely a leak has been sprung in my modesty. In what kind of work other than teaching can one rattle on at such prodigious length without fear of being told, mate, to stow it? Some of the most interesting people I know are professors, but so also are some of the most profound bores. I have been in putative conversations with professors that were, essentially, lectures delivered in counterpoint. It is the pedagogic habit of being listened to, the confidence of the talker with the captive audience, that makes the gas in certain of us professor-bores flow with the surge of a freshly found off-shore find. No one ever has to instruct us to go with the flow; the problem is to find a way to turn it off.

Ah, the flow, the flow, how often have I reached for the faucet to stem my own flow of talk, but in vain, in vain. Although I do have it in me to go on—and on, and on—I am not, strictly speaking, loquacious. Of the two main categories of bores, performance bores and loquacity bores, I feel that I fall into that of performance bores. I look for any opportunity to perform my repertoire of anecdotes, jokes, medium-long stories, puns, and fancy patter. Your standard performance bore operates under the quite unproven assumption that he is a delightful and generous fellow. What makes him generous is his readiness to share his endless conversational delights with you and, for that matter, nearly everyone else. Sometimes the performance bore really can be delightful; the problem is that he usually chooses to perform unbidden. And once begun, he resembles a radio without an Off switch, a triple-thick issue of the Sunday *New York Times*, an endless but not finally very nutritious strand of linguine.

The distinction between the performance bore and the loquacity bore, which is also that between talkers who are show-offs and talkers who are hopelessly garrulous, is not always a distinction easily made. The performance bore is often loquacious, and the loquacity bore is in turn often performing, but I think of the garrulity of the latter as rather more compulsive. The performance bore loves to talk, but the loquacity bore really cannot bring himself to stop talking. I know a greatly garrulous couple who have been married for decades, apparently quite happily. The husband once asked me if my wife and I found it difficult to retire at night, as they evidently do, for he and his wife often find themselves continuing to talk to and at each other until

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three or four in the morning—in the middle of the week. This is somewhat unusual, for loquacity bores, in my experience, are often formed by being too much alone, so that when they find themselves among company they unload. I know such a woman, a loquacity bore with oak-leaf clusters, to whom you daren't ask, "Sarah, how are you?" unless you are prepared to set aside a weekend to hear out the full answer.

Which brings us to the tricky question of male and female bores, their nature, number, and the differences between them. Here I speak in my capacity as chairman of the Committee to Re-establish Stereotypes Built on Gender. Clearly, neither sex has anything to be ashamed of in the production of bores, for both have always produced stellar examples. Casting back only in recent memory, I recall the female academic ill-luck seated me next to at an official dinner, who regaled me, from soup through soufflé, with the astonishing news that Las Vegas, which she had recently visited while attending a conference, was—are you ready for this?—vulgar. As she went on and on, banging away at the gong of the obvious, I felt only two things: the leaden oppressiveness of boredom and the desire to be, specifically, in Las Vegas. "Ah, to be in Vegas," thought I, while doing a difficult impression of a man who was mildly interested, "now that you're not there." Not long after, I met a man who held a cigarette in the old Peter Lorre style, vertically and between thumb and forefinger, and who, I came too late to recognize, was reciting for me, in not very abbreviated form, his doctoral dissertation, written some twenty-five years earlier, on Karl Marx. Fortunately, I was able to extricate myself, by hinting at suffering a light coronary attack, before he got to the footnotes. But to return to stereotypes based on gender, my sense is that men tend toward being performance bores while women toward being loquacity bores, though there is, as the social scientists say, a good deal of overlapping and much research yet to be done.

The taxonomy of bores is no small subject. Many are the world's bores—male and female, created He them—and just as many the subjects on which they can exercise their special talents. Barely to touch the surface, there are wine bores, sex bores, name-dropping bores, let-me-tell-you-my-dreams bores; there are politics bores, trendy bores, culture-vulture bores, health-and-diet bores. If one wishes to avoid the booby traps of boredom, which are not few, here are some subjects about which not many people are likely to be highly interested: your children, your seductions, your surgical operations, your plans for the future. As for general subjects about which nearly everyone figures to be interested, I can think of only two: scandalous behavior and the misfortunes of others.

The ultimate bore is the person who has only one subject—himself. (Whew, it's beginning to get a little warm around here.) He is followed by the person whose chief subject is not himself but some other single subject: free silver, budget deficits, national health insurance, vegetarianism. And this kind of bore is followed by the person who relates free silver, budget deficits, national health insurance, and vegetarianism to a single set of ideas, nowadays most likely Marxism or psychoanalysis or post-structuralism. We are discussing here, of course, our good friends, the monomaniacs. The old pop tune used to lament for "poor Johnny One-Note," but the real sympathy ought to go to the unfortunate devils who have to listen to him.

Mustn't, in any even preliminary taxonomy of bores, neglect drinking bores. So often it is here that one comes to the dreary crossroads where bore meets boor. F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald lent glamour to the notion of the charming drunk. But from all accounts, in order to really appreciate the charms of the Fitzgeralds when drunk, it was decisive that one *not* know them. ("If you want to get your furniture antiqued up," someone who did know them once said of Scott and Zelda, "you want to get the Fitzgeralds in—they'll antique it up in a single night.") I have known mean drunks and I have known jolly drunks, but what both have had in common, along with a powerful thirst, is an equal power to bore, for such charm as booze confers is usually drowned after the third drink. The odd thing is that many people drink out of fear that they are boring when sober—and they may well be correct. In Anthony Powell's novel *Afternoon Men* (itself rather a boring book in the understated English manner), one character says to another, "It's awful. One has about two drinks and one becomes a nuisance," to which the other replies, "You're dangerously near being

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one of the people who are a nuisance before they've had the two drinks."

The boring Andy Warhol, in what has by now become a rather boring observation, once noted that in America everyone would one day be famous for fifteen minutes. What he neglected to add was that to be famous for much longer than that put one at risk of becoming a bore. In the history of boredom, the celebrity bore is a relatively recent but fairly pervasive phenomenon. Television has aided this phenomenon immensely. To appear on television for any length of time and not prove boring is given to only a few. Some celebrities are able to bore without the aid of television—the novelist John Irving has been able to do it through the repeated use of the photograph of himself in wrestling togs; the singer Neil Diamond has been able to do it through the sameness of his falsely energetic songs—but, at the level of big-time boringness, nothing quite works like television. Certainly, when I consider "America's really big bores"—a phrase I think of as being said by the late television variety-show host Ed Sullivan—all have done it through television. As for those "really big bores," here is my top ten:

1. Walter Cronkite
2. Ed McMahon
3. All anchor men and women, in towns large and small
4. All talk-show hosts, the more serious the more boring
5. Mary Lou Retton
6. O. J. Simpson
7. Gary Hart
8. Phil Donahue
9. Jerry Lewis & Sammy Davis, Jr. (a combined entry)
10. Bill Cosby (alas)

I am sure that other people might have other entries or points of disagreement, but one of the things I like about my list is that it shows that one can be man or woman, Jew or Gentile, black or white, and still bore the pyjamas off millions of one's countrymen. "Hey," as anyone on my list might say, "that's what makes America great."

What makes the really big bores so boring is not merely their over-exposure, which television visits upon them all, but that they are so predictable—and hence so caricaturable. They do themselves, over and over and over, but then so does every bore, with his repeated jokes and his anecdotes and his confidence in his own suavity. Unlike the big bores, he does not work before millions, but does what he can at dinner parties, or in classrooms, or *hombre a hombre*. Many of his sentences begin with the word "Listen" and end with the phrase "which reminds me." He does not recognize the difference between small talk and large; the only distinction he observes is that between his talk and the next fellow's, and, truth to tell, he finds his rather better. I could go on. You don't have to tell me about bores. Listen, I could tell you a hundred stories about the bores I have encountered in my life, which reminds me. . . .

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The Contemporary College President

CLARK KERR and MARIAN L. GADE

APPROXIMATELY FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE will have served as college and university presidents in the 1980s and a similar number in the 1990s—ten thousand people by the end of the century. They will have been chosen out of perhaps fifty thousand seriously considered candidates in each decade who nominated themselves, were nominated by others, or were otherwise considered. Their selections as presidents will have taken place in the midst of intense interest by all trustees, by many faculty members, by a few alumni and students, and by the press. No other campus personnel selections will have drawn such attention.

These presidents will have operated in a multiple series of environments, most marked by confusion about goals, inconsistent pressures for action and for no action, substantial constraints, and opportunities small and great but occasionally nonexistent. Each of those appointed (and often their wives or husbands) will have had their skills intensely tested and their personalities and characters placed under substantial pressures. These ten thousand people will have been evaluated, and criticized, and praised to varying degrees by trustees (50,000 in total at any one time) and by faculty members (750,000 in total at any one time) and by students, alumni, and community members in the millions. The histories of their institutions will include the contributions of these presidents as the central characters in the continuing drama of each school.

Most of those who will have served as college president at the start of a decade will have departed by the end of that decade, owing to age, their own choice, or the choice of others; so, three generations of presidents will have held office between 1980 and 2000. Nearly all of

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these presidents will have affected their institutions in some significant manner and occasionally in major ways. Some institutions will have survived because of their presidents, while a few will have failed for the same reason; some institutions will have improved marginally, while others will have declined, again marginally, owing to their presidents' efforts. Occasionally, an institution will have been moved clearly ahead; and, rarely, some segment of higher education, or even all of higher education, will have been clearly improved because of a president's contributions. These are the ultimate tests of performance that, over the centuries, very few college presidents ever pass.

Overall, the fortunes of institutions of higher education will be more influenced by the actions of these ten thousand presidents between now and the year 2000 than by any other group of individuals of similar size within the academic community; and, on balance, the institutions will clearly be influenced for the better. To study these presidents and what they do, and how they do it, is to study higher education more generally, for their positions are so central to its development; to study them is also to observe the changing American society as it affects a set of institutions of central importance and great sensitivity to swirling social currents; and to study college presidents is, also, to see human nature in performance under stress.

The ten thousand presidents will have been chosen for many reasons and to serve many purposes. They will have come from diverse worlds in higher education and from even more diverse worlds of human nature. A universal characteristic—perhaps the only universal characteristic—of presidents is their diversity. Institutions of higher education are seldom any longer the "lengthening shadow of one man" (to the extent they ever were—and some were); but the presidents still cast more of a shadow than anyone else, and their shadows take many forms.

I

Changes in Environments for Presidents

The past forty years (1945–1985) have seen great changes in both the external and the internal environments in which these presidents and their institutions must operate. The changes brought about by developments in the external society have by and large resulted in less freedom of action within higher education. The changes are not the result of any one action by any one agency at any one time, but rather the accumulation of many threads woven by many hands, each thread tiny in itself, that have lessened the mobility of higher education, like Gulliver at the

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hands of the Lilliputians: "I attempted to rise but was not able to stir." A president tied down by Lilliputians becomes more like a Lilliputian himself.

This tying of threads has come in two great waves. The first began after World War II with greater federal involvement (in research, then in student aid, and then in affirmative action) and with vastly increased state support. The second wave began in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the student revolts, the Vietnam War, and Watergate—events that eroded trust within American institutions and energized special groups inside and outside of academe. The first wave brought more controls by government; the second brought more constraints imposed by group actions and by individual attitudes in the private sector.

For a long period of time, there has been an increase in public regulation of enterprises of all sorts. This has occurred, in part, because of the many, and increasingly severe, external consequences of internal decisions by institutions. Higher education, historically largely autonomous, has been less and less excluded from this development; once a sector apart, like the churches, it has become a more integral part of society. Over time, higher education has drawn more of its resources from the public purse. Additionally, admissions requirements have come to affect millions of potential students, not just a small elite; and there has been a revolution of rising "rights," including the "right" to a higher education. Both developments have brought more public involvement in the once largely private lives of higher education institutions.

At the federal level, increasing controls have followed the increased flow of money; but there has also been a flow of policies to protect individual and group rights. The federal government has taken an active interest in access, not only for students but also for potential faculty members drawn from minority groups and from the ranks of women. The states, in their advancing regulatory efforts, have mostly reflected financial concerns. They have become more intrusive in both the making of budgets and the expenditure of appropriations; and staffs of state agencies, including the legislative staffs, have become both larger and more competent. Forty-nine states (all but Michigan) now have some form of statewide coordination, at least for public higher education, while forty years ago there was only one (New York).

At the same time, changes in internal environments, within institutions and within the world of higher education, have also contributed to a loss of power within the presidency. It is to some of these changes that we now turn.

The biggest single shock to presidencies came from the student revolts of the second half of the 1960s. It was found that students (and their faculty allies) could depose presidents and do so quite easily, that

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presidents were "paper tigers" and had little real power. Not only did presidents fall, but so also did course requirements for general education, standards for grades, and in loco parentis rules.

There were two different eras in quick succession, with a sharp concussion in between: the before-the-revolts era and the after-the-revolts era. Presidential life has never been the same since. Presidents, among other things, lost moral stature vis-à-vis some student and faculty members. Activist student leaders wanted presidents to be instruments of "virtue," but few presidents wanted to be or could be moral leaders of the kind the students wished.

A second, but much more gradual and less dramatic, influence also came from the students: it is the student market. With fewer students in prospect and with more freedom for students to choose among institutions (owing to vastly increased student financial aid), and with more freedom to choose among courses because of reduced course requirements, the student market has come to dominate in most institutions what was once called "academic policy." Students dominate the rise and fall of campuses, of disciplinary and professional fields, and even of individual professors.

The biggest single long-range influence on presidencies, however, has come from the faculty. Instead of one faculty directly under the president, as was common until the Civil War, there came to be several, or even many faculties, with the rise of departments and professional schools, each with its own chair and dean. Departments and professional schools increasingly have asserted control over individual courses and the requirements for a major, as well as faculty appointments and promotions. "The professors," as Christopher Jencks and David Riesman observed, "won the war," but sometimes only to lose it to the student market.

Two more recent changes of importance have been the rise of the power of the provost and the introduction of faculty unions. The provostship has increased in influence, partly by default and partly by intent. The default has been that of the president, who has been drawn more into external affairs, or who has preferred concentration on external affairs, or both. Boards and presidents have often delegated, in theory or in practice or in both, most or even all academic authority to the faculty—authority over the curriculum, over research, over grades and student discipline, over selection and promotion of faculty members, and over teaching loads.

The intent of delegating authority to a provost has been to give the faculty their own officer-in-charge, someone whom they could largely select and over whose conduct in office they had substantial influence; and this move also allows the provost, with his or her own agenda and

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desire for recognition, to be a force in his or her own right. But the delegating of authority has occasionally been the work of the president. One president with whom we spoke said, "I deliberately built a structure to distance myself from academic decision-making. I could have no positive impact. I could only get myself into trouble."

Some provosts choose, or are required, to get along well with the president as well as with the faculty, and many do; but increasingly the provost's primary responsibility is to the faculty. Some provosts frankly say they are the "advocate" of the faculty and that the president is their joint "adversary." Some defend their territory fiercely—the president should "know his place," and it clearly is not thought to be in the academic area.

Yet another aspect of faculty influence comes through unions. Unionization always comes in initially as a counterforce to presidential power. In the organizing period, unions of necessity look for and advance grievances, resentments, and fears. Thus, they run essentially against the administration and never for it. They may continue this confrontational approach long after recognition, and this approach has an especially large influence on the presidency when unions establish direct communication with the board, thereby going around the president, and, particularly, when unions have their own representation on the board and, occasionally, are in control of the board. At the other extreme, unions become partners in administration, seeking good policies and the resolution of individual conflicts. More likely, however, unions become a second bureaucracy, extending the empire of rules and helping to administer those rules.

The first approach of unions (confrontational) places the president in eternal conflict with the faculty. The second (cooperative) approach can help the president solve problems and improve programs. The third (bureaucratic) approach works two ways. First, it takes away decision-making power from the president; but, second, it eases his or her tasks—the contract on its face makes many decisions the president otherwise would make, and other decisions are made through the grievance machinery, including arbitration, again reducing the burdens on the administration but also reducing its influence.

Current faculty moods across the country are leaning in at least two different directions: anti-administration, where real salaries have gone down and where retrenchments in faculty numbers have taken place; and pro-administration, where, because with lessened mobility, there are more faculty members of the "home-guard" type who identify with the institution and its leadership.

One overall positive result of unionization, and the most important one in the advance of faculty power and influence, is that faculty

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members who have greater participation in decision making are more seriously involved citizens of the university. Another result, nearly as important, is that the president is less involved in the institution's academic life. Only about 20 percent of presidents are now significantly involved in all of the following eight aspects of academic life, and not over 2 percent (included within the 20 percent) play a central role in each of these areas:

1. Personal concern for the participation in the selection of the provost and deans and department chairs, as opposed to turning these obligations over to one committee or another
2. Personal concern for each appointment as well as promotion to tenure
3. Personal concern for the development of an academic plan, including a statement of mission, and insistence that the academic plan guide the physical and financial plans, and not the other way around
4. Personal concern for what is happening in the world of knowledge—developing some sense, through reading and talking with people, about where the intellectual world is going, where the new developments are that provide the greatest opportunities for research and instruction, and which areas are moribund
5. Personal concern for the distribution and redistribution of resources to reflect the directions in which the world of knowledge and the world of work seem to be moving
6. Personal concern for the undergraduate curriculum, and particularly for general education
7. Personal concern for teaching, expressed, among other ways, by actually teaching a course or seminar or participating from time to time in the courses or seminars of others
8. Personal concern for understanding the academic needs on campus and representing them effectively off campus, and concern for creating broad support on campus and off for advancing learning skills and liberal education in general

Nearly all presidents show personal concern for one or more of these areas. Nearly none (only the 2 percent) meets the criterion of former Princeton University president Harold W. Dodds that 50 percent of a president's time be spent on academic affairs. Actual involvement, of course, varies by type of institution; it is highest in the elite liberal arts colleges and the private research universities.

There are some costs to the presidential retreat from the academic arena. The president has a better opportunity than most to look broadly at the institution. He or she also cannot represent the institution well to outside groups, such as alumni and legislators, unless fully familiar with

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its central purposes. And, in a period of scarce resources, the president cannot assign them most effectively without knowing how they are mostly used and best employed.

Boards of trustees, too, have changed and are changing. Few boards now merely receive and ratify reports and give advice. Fewer and fewer boards now restrict themselves only to policy, and these few are mostly in private institutions and in elite public ones. More boards nowadays are more managerial. Court cases and financial problems quickly draw them into management, and boards constituted with representatives of special interest groups, either by appointment or election, are heavily inclined in this direction in any event. Elected boards, in particular, tend to seek to represent the people who elected them.

Many campuses are now parts of systems, and the campus president and campus board (if any) operate within a larger frame of influence. In these situations, the president is less the single public representative of the total institution and more of a participant within a chain of command, as within a corporate conglomerate.

The president, in today's more complex setting, has too little time and too few skills. He or she cannot personally handle most transactions for lack of time, and some transactions require skills that cannot reasonably be developed in their entirety by any single person. Thus, of necessity, staff members carve their way into decision-making territory once owned by the president. The average size of campuses has doubled in public institutions since 1960 and increased by one-third in private ones. Bureaucracy has made corresponding gains. More of what a president does is now handled secondhand, via paper, and less firsthand in personal contact.

The forces that have increasingly confined presidencies have usually liberated someone else—students or faculty members or members of minority groups or members of other special groups. What looks "bad" from the point of view of the presidency nearly always looks "good" from some other point of view. The fact remains, however, that, within the new contexts, the presidency in most institutions has been diminished.

The college president has lost power and has become more hemmed in; and this is true also of most others in executive positions, even the president of the United States. Most administrators have fewer constituencies on which they can reliably count than they had in the past and more inconsistent and competitive constituencies. Administrators now routinely encounter less loyalty, less tolerance, and more anti-authority sentiment.

Power has been taken from the college presidency by state and federal governments, by courts and special interest groups, by coordi-

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nating councils and trustees, by students and faculty, and by alumni and staff; but the college presidency is not alone in this experience.

A strange and significant corollary to this decline in power is that the presidency at the same time has become more important to the institution as a whole: it is the one check and balance against power incursions jeopardizing the long-range welfare of the institution, whether these incursions come from outside forces, from students, faculty, or staff, or even from individual trustees. The presidency is less influential just at the time it is increasingly needed to defend institutional autonomy, to manage conflict, to integrate separatist forces, to offset small-group efforts at inefficiencies and exploitations, and to advance programs despite attempted special-interest opposition. One of the most senior and successful of all presidents said after nearly thirty years in office, "I do not have a tenth of the power I had when I began this job, but I need ten times as much to do it well and particularly to curb the excesses of power in the hands of others—faculty, students, trustees, alumni, the state, the federal government." He also observed that, for the nation as a whole, "the loss of educational leadership on campus and moral leadership in society has been very costly." All these developments, taken together, led former Rhode Island College president Joseph F. Kauffman to conclude: "There is not much joy in being a college president today."

II

Changing Roles for Spouses

The president's spouse was once a known quantity. Her role was comparable to that of the minister's wife. In fact, most of the early presidents were ministers. The minister's wife kept the house, was responsible for social affairs, helped with the personal side of the ministry—as, for example, in visiting the sick—and was the minister's only confidante and source of psychological support. These are also the traditional roles played by the president's wife.

But all this has changed or is changing. Many forces have been at work. The public community colleges are a relatively new phenomenon, and the public nonresidential comprehensive colleges and universities in urban areas are far more important than in earlier times. In neither type of institution has the role of the spouse been as important as in the private, residential liberal-arts colleges and in the research universities that once dominated the higher education scene. Also, there are more professional jobs open to women (30 to 40 percent of female spouses of presidents in four-year colleges have paid jobs of their own; and in

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two-year colleges, perhaps as many as 60 to 70 percent); the feminist movement on campus rejects the role of the traditional spouse as being of next to no importance, perhaps not even acceptable; and public attitudes grant a more independent role for the spouse.

The role of the president's spouse, which still usually means a wife, is full of tensions. Board members and people in the local community often expect more than the modern wife is willing to give. Young faculty wives frequently are unwilling to help with, or even go to, social affairs on campus, or to give voluntary help to such campus projects as helping foreign students. Feminists on the faculty and staff may even disparage the active traditional spouse for doing for free things that should not be done at all.

The most tension, however, is felt by the spouses themselves. They often have insufficient household and secretarial help. One said that if she writes her memoirs she will call them "Fifteen Years as a Barmaid." They must supply not only their time but sometimes also their china and silver and linen. Personal possessions sometimes disappear as souvenirs into the purses or pockets of guests, especially in public institutions, where people steal spoons or napkins as they might ashtrays or towels from a hotel, assuming them to be public property. One spouse calculated that she was the second largest donor to the college—and she had to give a dinner each year for the largest donor! They are often not given funds to travel with the president to official meetings, where they can meet with and share experiences and learn from other spouses. They are often put under close surveillance and strict rules. One wife was put under orders to reinstate an old policy that all women entering the president's house as guests must wear white gloves; another wife that she must quit attending a seminar at a nearby university because she had to be available in case someone at the college or in town became suddenly ill; and another that she must get a face-lift.

They lose their anonymity. If they run a red light, it is on the radio and in the local paper; and not for anyone else, not even the mayor's wife, is this done. Their children also lose their anonymity, and they are expected to behave unusually well; sometimes they react to the contrary.

Even the non-active spouse is affected as far as where to live, how to behave (no gossiping!), and how to share the president's time at night and on weekends (with meetings and cultural programs and sports events). Perhaps no other position in modern America, except that of president of the United States, so affects the spouse.

No longer can it be said without equivocation, as did President Charles William Eliot of Harvard, that one of the "delights" of a presidency of a college or university is "that the wife can share it and greatly help in it."

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The spouse relationship was probably never as easy as Eliot implied. There are problems as well as delights in two-person jobs of all kinds. In the modern world, however, it is the two-job married couple that now is most common; and that arrangement has its own special delights and problems, including two schedules, two sets of friends, two sets of job-related burdens to bear, and, possibly, two sources of companionship.

The most intense problems of spouses of college presidents are: conflicts between the expectations of trustees and alumni and others, on the one hand, and spouses on the other (the former often anticipating more than the latter are any longer willing to give); conflicts between what the president needs in the way of psychological support and what modern spouses are able or willing to offer; and the difficulties inherent in "partnerships," especially those regarding how wise it is for the spouse to enter into the substantive business of the college or university. Each of these areas can be, and sometimes is, an explosive issue for college presidents and their spouses.

Many presidents today must learn to adapt to the spouse moving out on them at the same time that the provost is moving in on them. It is not clear that there is any net gain in this situation for many presidents.

III

The Diversity of Institutional Contexts

A great theme of higher education in the 1960s was presidential leadership, but it affected educational institutions in quite different ways. Over three hundred community colleges were started. Teachers' colleges were becoming comprehensive colleges and universities, many with doctoral-granting programs; often their presidents were the founders of these transformed institutions. Doctoral-granting institutions almost universally were trying to break into the ranks of research universities; their presidents were aggressive competitors—and a few won out. Research universities were riding the great rising wave of federal funds for research (which lasted until 1968) and were in fierce competition for more prestigious listings as recipients of funds and honors; their presidents were also competitive, and some were successful in competition. Many selective liberal-arts colleges were adjusting their programs and images to the new styles of their counterculture students, and their presidents often reluctantly went along. Many less-selective liberal-arts colleges were contending with greater competition from nearby public institutions; their presidents had to fight for survival—and some lost.

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The presidents of leading private universities and colleges—including Princeton, Yale, and Williams, schools with powerful and conservative alumni—were fighting battles to add women and members of minority groups to their student bodies. These presidents became prominent leaders as a result of the opposition they overcame. Those presidents meeting less resistance, such as those at Harvard, Columbia, and Penn, had less of a chance to show their leadership. But all of them were, to a degree, social reformers, however reluctant. Catholic institutions were adapting to the new ecumenical drift of the Catholic church and thus becoming more diverse in their faculties, their student values, their boards of trustees; and here the president of Notre Dame led the way.

For college presidents the dominant themes of the 1980s are good management of funds, effective recruitment of new students, and astute conduct of public relations. Survivorship is never far out of mind. But each category of institution has its own context. Some illustrations follow.

Growth and quality improvement are still the major questions for rising research universities, public and private, in those parts of the nation with continuing population growth and substantial potential for the creation of wealth. This is particularly true in Arizona, Southern California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Utah, but also in a few areas, such as Pittsburgh, which are undergoing economic renovation. In these areas the opportunities for aggressive leadership are still substantial, and presidents enjoy an atmosphere somewhat like that of the early 1960s.

Continuing leadership opportunities are also available in the group of private universities and colleges of the academic first rank, which are intent on further raising the quality of their students and academic life. They have a good flow of funds. Also, more prospective students now come from second-generation college-attending families, with many of these students aspiring to enter prestigious private institutions. These institutions, additionally, are blessed with a high quality of trustee governance. Faculties usually are led by their most devoted members, not by the most disgruntled. These academic communities generally have great pride and loyalty. Leadership still has a good chance, and the presidency carries great prestige.

A third area for effective leadership is that of the evangelical Protestant institutions, which are prospering as never before. Their student numbers are rising, money flows into them from many sources, and their graduates are preferred in the job market. In these schools students and faculty members both accept authority. The presidents have a great sense of mission: They are doing "God's work," protecting young

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persons from the corrupting influences of modern American life. These presidents are among the most confident of all that they can accomplish their aims.

A fourth area with active leadership is that of the new, predominantly Hispanic institutions. They are mostly located in population growth areas of the country—Florida, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Members of Hispanic communities are advancing in the labor market and in political influence; and these communities have a great sense of unity and a deep respect for their leaders, including college presidents. Their presidents are persons of influence on campus and in the surrounding community. They have a great sense of mission in advancing the welfare of their people and a sense of security in their solid political support.

A fifth area for aggressive leadership is composed of those less-selective liberal-arts colleges facing decline or even extinction—and that know it or are otherwise entrepreneurially inclined. Here the president, if his or her programs are successful, can be a savior.

Faculties know their jobs depend on good leadership, and they are, as a consequence, usually less devoted to their customary prerogatives. There is nothing like a sudden 50 percent drop in enrollment to liberate a faculty from attachment to the status quo ante. The president can even change the curriculum for its own sake or for the sake of a new image. These academic communities are concerned with survival and are willing to take action to ensure their continuance.

Land-grant universities and the more prestigious public doctoral-granting institutions are favored by their local, regional, and even national reputations. They attract community support and alumni loyalty. Their boards tend to be composed of independent-minded, experienced members who usually rise above special interests. Presidents here are likely to be in a relatively strong position. However, these institutions often are members of a system of colleges and universities subject to coordinating mechanisms; presidential freedom of action is circumscribed as a result. These presidents, nevertheless, are universally recognized as leaders in their states. Their institutions are often quite competitive with one another for research funds and academic recognition. The strength that some leaders elsewhere get from a sense of mission or from the academic community's hope for survival, these presidents get from the competitive urges of their supporters.

Catholic institutions no longer have the same degree of support from a close-knit Catholic community that they enjoyed before the church became more ecumenical, before Catholics became more secular and less respectful of the church's authority. Nevertheless, the presidential position in Catholic colleges is still a relatively favorable one. New

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presidents are likely to have been given opportunities to prepare themselves in advance through pertinent experiences. Those presidents who are already members of the clergy are given assurances that their religious order or diocese will give them opportunities for useful service after their presidencies are completed, yielding them an unusual degree of security. They function on campus amid civility in personal relations and acceptance of authority. They have a sense of mission in creating a good moral climate for their academic community by serving as keepers of religious values.

Colleges exclusively for women are led mostly by persons with a similar sense of mission, and their presidents also may be surrounded by a psychologically comfortable community of supporters.

Still another distinctive group is comprised of those private institutions guided mostly by the student market to offer services, programs, and classes that students want. Here the market largely determines what the institution does. Presidents are expected to make fast and precise adjustments to market possibilities and are given considerable latitude by their boards, provided they satisfy the crucially important criterion of continued solvency. Many faculty members are temporary or part-time and, consequently, not particularly concerned about governance. Students tend to look on the institution as a source of service, not as "our" college to govern or misgovern.

Public comprehensive colleges and universities face challenges to increase their production of primary and secondary school teachers (after twenty years of decline) and of technologically trained graduates to meet the new skill requirements of society. They are subject to greater than average negative demographic pressures because other institutions absorb students who earlier would have chosen public comprehensive colleges and universities. They also are likely to be under relatively heavy state controls, to have boards responsive to special interests, to have unionized faculties, to suffer in the shadow of more prestigious institutions in their states, to be within systems of institutions, and to emphasize seniority in personnel decisions. The tests of management tend to be relatively severe and the chances for path-breaking efforts to be modest, although as a group these presidents have been more interested in improvements and more aggressive in pushing them than in many other institutions.

Less-selective and less-aggressive liberal-arts colleges generally will face heavy demographic pressures over the coming years, and some have not had any significant growth for a quarter century or more. Their presidents often are heavily involved in external fund-raising, if it is not in fact their overwhelming preoccupation. Their boards frequently are of the managerial type, with some members living in the immediate

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community and accustomed to running their own small businesses. Their communities often keep very careful scrutiny over the private life of the president (one had to resign because the community felt he had remarried too soon after the death of his wife). Often their faculties are fearful of the future but still in a mood to resist any change, since sometimes not even the threat of extinction is enough to encourage faculties to consider new approaches.

Although important to their localities, the names of these institutions often draw little recognition outside their regions and little concern by foundations and other potential sources of support. Some of these colleges, however, have had strong presidents, including ministers.

In the 1960s, public community colleges and the three hundred founder-presidents of new colleges were riding high. Enrollments were rising phenomenally, and new functions were being added constantly. Board members were usually the leading citizens of their communities. In the 1980s, the founders are almost all gone. Enrollments have leveled off, and funds are harder to get. Board members now are more likely to be representatives of special-interest groups, and the colleges now are more likely to be affected by divisions within their surrounding communities. Boards are more likely to be involved in administrative detail than they were in earlier times. The sense of mission often has been reduced or even lost. Faculties often are unionized, and the unions sometimes control one or more, or even a majority, of board members; and unions often practice confrontation with presidents and always support the introduction of negotiated rule making to reduce presidential decision making. The short-term processes lead to short-run tests of performance and sometimes to short-term presidencies. The long run is considered from September until June.

The best situations for community college presidents are those where the college is the center of its small town or suburban community and provides the center for cultural, social, and entertainment activities; where leading citizens still serve on the board; and where many students still use the community college as the accepted stepping-stone to a four-year college. Such a college is a small and homogeneous community, and many of these campuses have the feel of a less-selective liberal-arts college.

The worst situations for community college presidents are in metropolitan centers where there is no sense of community but rather great fractionalization among diverse elements; where boards are small and terms are short; and where members are elected. Here a president may face, within two or three years, a majority of board members who were elected after his or her appointment as president and members who might have run against the incumbent president. These presidents are

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on the social firing line where rich meet poor, where race meets race, where unions meet the public, and where special-interest group meets special-interest group. In short, the situations of community college presidents run the whole gamut from heaven on earth to hell in this life.

A further category includes many historically black institutions. These colleges often have lost most of their best athletes and many academically highly qualified students to historically white institutions. Many members of the black community have suffered reverses in the labor market and in federal protection. Spirits are often low. The presidents of these colleges were, in earlier times, often bishops of the church or leading ministers, and they carried great influence—the greatest of anyone in the black community. Today, there are other leaders as well. The president now often faces hostility when he comes back to campus after having dealt with the white establishment and perhaps having compromised with it, when once he was the hero who brought back the funds that kept the college alive another year. These presidents are under enormous pressure to attend functions on campus and in the community and to serve on committees at the local, regional, and national levels. Most of them have a very great sense of mission, which is that their institutions are essential to the black community, and this sense of mission carries them through fiscal and political emergencies. They have the knowledge that they are models for other members of their race and must perform at the highest levels of conduct.

By and large, from a presidential vantage point, it is easier to be in a private institution with more favorable chances for an effective board of trustees than in a public one; to have a policy-making or report-receiving board rather than a managerial or representational board, whether public or private; to be in an area undergoing substantial population and economic growth rather than in a static or declining area; to share a strong sense of mission with related constituencies; to have obvious market pressures to sanctify leadership decisions; to be in a position that carries prestige rather than in one that does not; to be in a homogeneous rather than in a fractionated community. Ironically, there are relatively few private institutions in the growing geographical areas, and thus few best of all possible worlds for college presidents. But there are some boards of public research universities in growing areas that act as though they are private boards, showing loyalty, competence, and a sense of autonomy. Presidents in this situation have unusually good opportunities for leadership. They may come to be in the best of all actual worlds.

Presidents who operate in relatively favorable institutional conditions have much more choice in the strategies they choose to follow than those who live in less favorable conditions; some of the latter may have

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no choice except to make the effort to survive. Few presidents can rise totally above the conditions that surround them; few can levitate on the strength of their own convictions and energy alone. Leaders may be "born," but the specific conditions in which they work may either liberate or suffocate them—may let them bloom or cause them to wither.

Four axioms follow from all that has been said here: (1) a college presidency is bound by the institutional context; (2) conditions vary greatly; (3) there is no single best, or even possible, strategy for all conditions; (4) the president should be evaluated within the possibilities and limitations of the conditions he or she faces. Environments for presidents are very unequal. Some of those with the least conducive environments are making the greatest possible contributions to their institutions and to the members of the communities they serve. They often get the least credit, although they deserve the most.

The variable factor in each situation is the president—his or her strategies and tactics, skills and character. The commingling of environments and character constitutes a great continuing drama played out on many stages before many audiences. Heroes and villains both emerge; courage as well as cowardice is shown; wisdom and folly are variously displayed; and nobody can really know precisely how many or how much of each are the result of time and place, on the one hand, or of strong, wise human character, on the other. That is the eternal puzzle.

Vernon Young

1912–1986

Contributor, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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Medical Zealots

WILLIAM A. NOLEN

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS the general public has been deluged with medical information. One has only to turn on one's television set to the evening news to hear the newscaster say something like, "Rebellion in South Africa; Congress to vote on farm bill; stocks hit new high; doctor in Oregon claims thousands of unnecessary operations for low-back pain are being done every year—all this, and the weather, too, in the next half hour."

When, twenty minutes later, we get to the doctor in Oregon, he is given ninety seconds to explain why he thinks too many back operations are being performed. He tries to discuss the subject intelligently, but the problem of low-back pain and its proper treatment is controversial and complex, and in ninety seconds he can barely mention physiotherapy, enzyme injection, manipulation, disk surgery, acupuncture, and the half-dozen or so other methods of available treatment. What's more, it is often left unclear whether the doctor is a rheumatologist, an osteopath, an orthopedist, a chiropractor, or perhaps even a quack with a Ph.D. from some completely unaccredited institution in California (a state that seems to be waist deep in unaccredited institutions). We are certainly likely to emerge with no idea whether his contention that back surgery is being overdone is based on comprehensive statistical studies or is simply his opinion based on personal prejudice or experience. This bit of medical "information" is likely to leave the viewer more confused than enlightened. The viewer still does not know what, if anything, he ought to do about his backache. And if he is scheduled to have an operation for low-back pain in the next few days, this television snippet may raise his anxiety level to astounding heights.

That there is among the general public a thirst for medical news is undeniable. Television stations, magazines, and newspapers regularly run surveys to see what their viewers and readers want; if no one wanted medical news, one can be sure it would disappear. Every woman's magazine runs at least one medical column a month (for twelve years, 1970–1982, I myself wrote "A Doctor's World," a sort of "disease of the

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month" column for *McCall's*). I did not realize quite how far this thirst for medical information had gone until, one afternoon in October of 1985, I happened to step into the Kroch's & Brentano's bookstore near the Palmer House in Chicago and found a hefty stack of the current issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* on the newsstand. Suffice it to say that at least half of the physicians I know find the scientific articles in the *New England Journal* too esoteric (and complicated) for their tastes. I find it difficult to believe that anyone without a formal medical education could read or understand these articles, yet there they were. I don't imagine that Kroch's & Brentano's would grant them shelf space if they didn't sell.

This thirst for medical knowledge would, of course, be harmless—might even be good—if we could be sure that the medical information the public was receiving was accurate; but we can't be sure. In fact, I know that the taste for the sensational leads to the distribution of a great deal of medical misinformation to the public—not only in papers like the *National Enquirer*, where no one in his right mind expects scientific accuracy—but on respectable or semi-respectable television shows, regional and national. I could, for example, cite a segment of "Sixty Minutes"—the producers of "Sixty Minutes" are particularly adept at implying things without specifically saying them—that more or less promoted a kooky cancer treatment center in the Bahamas as a possible salvation for desperate cancer victims. But it would take too long and might seem self-serving (I made a personal investigation of the center and found the treatment it dispensed was worthless). Rather, I shall try to make my point by using examples of medical misinformation that have emanated from highly respected medical centers. If these centers can produce nonsense, one would be foolish to pay much attention to medical data that comes from sources with a significantly lesser degree of medical credibility.

"The most difficult thing in the world to prove is something that is untrue." I don't know who first said that, but whoever it was didn't take physicians into account. We have little difficulty proving that the untrue is true. Consider, for example, the October 24, 1985, issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, easily the most prestigious and highly respected of all American medical journals. In that issue are two articles, one of which proves beyond a reasonable doubt that by giving female hormones to postmenopausal women you can "substantially" protect them against heart attacks. The second article, equally well substantiated, proves that if you give female hormones to postmenopausal women you "substantially" increase their chances of having a heart attack.

It is obvious that one of these articles is flawed—or, to put it more bluntly, wrong. The editors of the *Journal* ("the *Journal*" in medical

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circles always refers to the *New England Journal of Medicine*), being very intelligent physicians, realized, of course, that one of these articles was wrong; but neither they nor their "referees" (experts in the subject written about who scrutinize articles before they are accepted for publication) could find a significant flaw in either article. Therefore, they published them both. In addition, they published an editorial by one of their consulting experts who wrote, among other things; "I simply cannot tell from the present evidence whether these hormones add to the risk of cardiovascular disease, diminish the risk, or leave it unchanged, and must resort to the investigator's great cop out: More research is needed." From the practical point of view, this negated the proposed effect of both articles. A doctor in clinical practice, having labored through both articles, still wouldn't know whether he ought to tell his women patients if it was safe to take "the pill." But, whatever advice the physician gave her, he could back it up with an appropriate scientific article.

It seems to me likely that this is an illustration of one of the problems that afflict medical research; researchers have often decided what they are convinced is true before they embark on the research. One noted professor of surgery (who shall remain nameless because he is deceased) was widely known as a man who would often assign a surgical resident or two to the dog laboratory for six months with instructions to prove some thesis or other true, usually that a clever new operative procedure would cure one or another disease. And woe unto the resident who emerged six months later to report that the operation the professor had devised did not achieve what it was supposed to achieve. That resident would, in all probability, spend his remaining years of surgical training in some small community hospital. If you couldn't prove what the Chief wanted you to prove, what good were you?

One flagrant example of this sort of thinking is the relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. There is little doubt in my mind or in the minds of the thousands of doctors who have studied lung cancer that cigarette smoking is linked with lung cancer. There are probably very few lay people who do not assume that it has been proven that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer. When the cigarette companies run advertisements implying that the link has not been as solidly established as the medical profession claims, one wants to go after the executives of the cigarette companies with machetes. How can these people be so callous as to put their economic self-interest ahead of the misery and suffering of those afflicted by that dread cancer?

The fact is, however, that no one has yet proven—in the strict scientific sense of the word—that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer. A few years ago, in their zeal to establish this claim as fact, doctors from

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the American Cancer Society called a well-publicized press conference at which they announced that they had, in fact, proven that cigarette smoking caused lung cancer in dogs. If they could prove cigarettes caused lung cancer in dogs, we were supposed to accept the fact that, by extrapolation, it caused lung cancer in humans. This is not something one automatically does in science—species differences mean that what happens in one species does not necessarily happen in another—but we can hardly demand that an attempt be made to use cigarettes to produce lung cancer in humans. What the Cancer Society doctors had done was perform tracheotomies on a breed of beagles and force the beagles to smoke several packages of cigarettes a day for several months. The doctors then sacrificed the beagles and found changes in their lungs that the researchers called "pre-cancerous." This was their "proof" that cigarette smoking caused lung cancer.

Once the hullabaloo of the press conference was over, experts who were not associated with the American Cancer Society reviewed the beagle research and found it so flawed as to be worthless. Among other things, the Cancer Society people had chosen a species of beagle that was genetically prone to the development of lung tumors, and the tumors found in their dogs were no different either in type or in number from the tumors that non-smoking beagles of the same species developed. The presentation by the American Cancer Society had been so widely publicized that, apparently, the doctors who found the evidence flawed were reluctant to embarrass their colleagues by criticizing them too loudly. In any event, I think it's safe to say that most of the general public—and many if not most physicians—were left with the impression that the American Cancer Society had proven that cigarette smoking causes cancer. That wasn't true then (about 1965), and it isn't true now.

In fact, if one looks at some of the evidence collected by the cigarette companies, one can hardly fail to find it interesting. For example, between 1930 and 1960 the incidence of lung cancer in human residents of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, went up significantly. Since cigarette smoking was increasing in popularity at that time, the anti-cigarette people were tempted to attribute the lung cancer to the cigarettes. Unfortunately, for their purposes, between 1901 and 1964 every animal that died in the Philadelphia Zoo was autopsied, and guess what? The incidence of lung cancer in the zoo animals increased at almost exactly the same rate as in humans. In fact, in fourteen types of animals (those that spent almost all their time in the open air), the incidence of lung cancer between 1934 and 1962 was six times greater than in the previous twenty-eight years. Need I say that the zoo animals did not smoke? It is also true that, although the British smoke far more cigarettes per capita than we do in the United States, the incidence of lung cancer in England

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is lower than it is in the United States. If cigarettes cause lung cancer, how do we explain this discrepancy?

I am not an advocate of cigarette smoking. I am convinced that cigarette smoking makes one more likely to get bronchitis, emphysema, heart disease, and, yes, lung cancer. But for the medical profession to insist that cigarette smoking, in and of itself, causes lung cancer is simply dishonest. It hasn't been proven, and no one should claim that it has.

Let's forget about cigarettes now—for a doctor to say a kind word for the cigarette companies is just short of professional suicide—and mention an instance or two where even doctors will admit they were wrong. I will not go back to bloodletting or the refusal to accept Pasteur's work on germs—that is ancient history and almost prescientific, and one can hardly blame modern doctors for what went on that long ago—but I think one can reasonably go back thirty years.

In 1957, a highly respected surgeon from a Pennsylvania medical school got the idea that by tying off the main trunk of the internal mammary artery he might be able to improve the circulation to the heart. To understand his reasoning you have to know that the two internal mammary arteries, which run along the inside of the chest on either side of the sternum, branch off to the sac that encloses the heart. If one looks at it from an engineering point of view, it is as if the internal mammary artery is a river that divides into two branches. Theoretically, if you were to block off one of those branches, perhaps with a very high dam, more water would flow down the unobstructed branch. In this case, the unobstructed branch, which runs to the heart, should theoretically increase the blood supply to the heart.

Since angina (heart pain) is caused by an inadequate supply of blood to the heart, this operation ought to, in theory, relieve patients with angina. It is a relatively simple operation, one that can be done under local anesthesia; so this surgeon from Pennsylvania performed the operation on a few hundred patients with angina. To his great delight about 50 percent of the patients reported that their angina attacks had decreased in frequency or intensity. He reported his results in a surgical journal, and, although skeptics doubted the efficacy of the operation, hundreds of other surgeons took it up. I was in residency training at that time, and I even knew general practitioners who performed the operation.

Less than a year later another surgeon, one of the skeptics, decided to test the efficacy of the internal mammary ligation, as the operation was called. He operated on one hundred patients with angina. In fifty, he tied off the internal mammary artery, and in the other fifty, he made only a skin incision. None of the patients knew whether they had had a real or

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a sham operation. The results in both groups were the same; about half of each group of patients reported relief from their angina. Shortly thereafter the operation was abandoned.

Another interesting venture from the same era was a procedure called the gastric freeze. It was used to treat bleeding ulcers of the duodenum and stomach. The theory was that if one were to freeze the stomach it would stop secreting acid and give an ulcer time to heal. The doctor would persuade the patient to swallow a balloon through which a solution of alcohol at a subfreezing temperature would then be circulated by a pumping machine designed specifically for this purpose. The stomach would then be frozen solid—and I mean solid—for several hours, after which the solution would be removed and the stomach aspirated. If the bleeding had stopped, the balloon would be removed; and if not, the freeze would be repeated.

Many of the ulcers stopped bleeding. Unfortunately, in a not insignificant number of patients, several hours or a few days later the inner lining of the stomach would slough off, in whole or in part, and emergency removal of the stomach would be necessary to stop the hemorrhage. In other cases, a few days after the stomach had been frozen, it would split open at one or more points, again requiring emergency surgery. To say that the gastric freeze hurt or killed more patients than it helped would be a gross understatement.

During the approximately two years that doctors were experimenting with ("fooling around with," to be more accurate) the gastric freeze operation, several medical supply companies produced machines to be used in freezing stomachs. They could be examined at the exhibits at the meetings of the American College of Surgeons. Nor was the public kept in the dark about this amazing scientific breakthrough; the January 1963 issue of *Reader's Digest* published an article entitled, "They're Freezing Ulcers to Death." Unfortunately, as I've already noted, the doctors were also freezing patients to death. After two years of popularity, the gastric freeze method of ulcer treatment passed on to deserved oblivion.

It is not terribly difficult to name medical procedures that we once believed to be true that we now know are not true. I remember well that sometime between 1953 and 1960, when I was a surgical resident on the Cornell Surgical Division at Bellevue, a paper was published that "proved" that people with Type A blood were more susceptible to stomach cancer than were patients of other blood types. I mentioned this finding at a surgical conference (anxious to gain a few brownie points for knowledge of the current literature), but our director, a man of experience and common sense, simply said, "I wouldn't take that too seriously if I were you, Bill; I can't see any logical reason why blood type and stomach cancer should be connected, and I suspect someone will

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quickly show there's no correlation." Which is, of course, exactly what happened.

For the last twenty years or so everyone has known that people with a Type A personality—compulsive persons who run from task to task, always looking at their watches—were much more likely to have heart attacks than were those who were chronically late, unreliable, "laid-back." Books with titles like *Type A Behavior and Your Heart* appeared on the paperback racks, and physicians even incorporated into their regimes for rehabilitating coronary patients exercises aimed at converting Type A personalities into relaxed Type B personalities.

Within the last two years scientific studies have finally been done that have relegated this Type A coronary susceptibility theory to the ash heap. There are those who refuse to give up (in particular, doctors whose careers have been built on this theory), but it is certainly only a matter of time before we all concede that Type A, Type B, or Type anything susceptibility to a heart attack is unrelated to personality.

Another theory that is dying hard is the one that says the power of positive thinking plays a major role in recovery from disease. Ever since Norman Cousins popularized the theory in his book *The Anatomy of an Illness As Perceived by the Patient*, large numbers of patients and doctors have swallowed whole the idea that one is more likely to recover from a serious illness if one learns to think positively and, in particular, to laugh. As a specific prescription, Mr. Cousins heartily recommends tapes of Alan Funt's show "Candid Camera," which apparently always sent Mr. Cousins into gales of laughter that almost immediately produced at least a temporary remission of his symptoms. (Personally, "Candid Camera" always made me cringe with embarrassment rather than laugh; but then, when it comes to humor, de gustibus non est disputandum.)

Unfortunately for the laughter treatment exponents, in 1985 some psychologists and psychiatrists reported on two groups of patients who had been ill. They gave them psychometric tests that enabled the researchers to divide the two groups into positive and negative thinkers. Subsequent follow-up showed that recurrence of the disease was the same in the two groups. Marcia Angell, an editor at the *New England Journal of Medicine*, then wrote an editorial that said, in essence, finally we can put away the theory that positive thinking helps a patient and negative thinking hurts them. Patients can now stop feeling guilty if their disease gets worse or recurs (which was, of course, the flip side of Cousins's paean to think positively and laugh at "Candid Camera").

The psychologist's article and Ms. Angell's editorial both evoked powerful proof that the "kill the messenger" approach to bad news is with us yet. Dozens of doctors (and, naturally, Norman Cousins) wrote

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very strong letters protesting the blow that had been delivered to the "think positive" theory of therapy. Unfortunately, as they say in poker, "the cards read," and the cards still say that the "think positive" theory has no scientific merit. (Before some astute and extremely prolific reader points it out, let me confess that in my book *A Surgeon's Book of Hope* I, too, more or less promoted the "think positive" attitude. All I can say is mea culpa.)

When you make an error in correlating blood Type A with predilection for stomach cancer, or compulsive behavior with an increased incidence of heart attacks, you really haven't hurt anyone through your errors. Perhaps you have given some people an increase in their anxiety levels, but no irreversible damage has been done. On the other hand, when you start using sharp instruments on the brain, you are asking for serious trouble. Which brings us to our next story: the tale of the prefrontal lobotomy.

In 1935 Antonio Moniz, a psychiatrist, attended a medical meeting at which a fellow physician showed films of a rowdy chimpanzee, one of the sort who was inclined to terrible tantrums and wild, destructive behavior. The physician then destroyed the prefrontal lobes of the irascible chimp's brain, and movies taken after the procedure showed that the chimp became a docile, harmless animal who seemed to like nothing more than to lounge around all day. All of his aggression was gone, and he was a joy to be with.

Dr. Moniz had some human patients who were, like the chimp, prone to bouts of aggressive, even violent behavior, and he wondered if they might not respond to surgery on the frontal lobes of their brains, as the chimpanzee had. Unfortunately (for Moniz) he was not a surgeon, but he persuaded one Almeida Lima, who was a qualified surgeon, to operate for him. The operation consisted of making two small holes in the skull just above the eyes by using an instrument more or less like an ice pick and destroying six "cones" of brain tissue in each frontal lobe. Moniz and Almeida operated (if you can call their procedure an operation) on twenty patients, and then, in 1936, they published a paper in a scientific journal. They reported that none of the twenty patients had died, that fourteen had improved, and that six were unchanged. Patients with agitated depression seemed to benefit most; schizophrenics showed no improvement. (All of my information on prefrontal lobotomies comes from the book *Schizophrenia*, by John M. Neale and Thomas F. Oltmanns, which was published by Wiley in 1980.)

In the twenty years following Moniz's report, literally thousands of patients underwent this bizarre operation called prefrontal lobotomy. New instruments and techniques were developed, but it remained essentially a blind operation in which no one really knew what they

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were cutting and why. You might think it odd that, despite Moniz's report that schizophrenics were unimproved by the procedure, it was schizophrenics who were most often subjected to it. The authors speculate that this happened because there were (1) an increasing number of patients, (2) a shortage of treatment personnel, and (3) "most important, an absence of more effective therapeutic procedures." In other words, the attitude was, "What the hell, there isn't anything else to offer, so we might as well try this." I am afraid that philosophy is a good deal more common in medical practice than patients realize; though usually it involves dispensing some innocuous, if ineffective pill, and not a brain operation.

Neale and Oltmanns go on to say that, even in retrospect, "it is difficult, however, to know whether these techniques [prefrontal lobotomies] were more beneficial than less radical therapies or, indeed, whether they produced better results than no treatment at all." Frightening, isn't it?

After the middle 1950s the procedure "gradually fell from favor," as the authors put it, for three reasons: (1) Substantial numbers of patients had serious negative effects, such as deficiencies in creative goal directory thinking and problems in emotional response. (2) A small but disturbing number [wording is from *Schizophrenia*, not me] died during the operation, and many had post-operative seizures. (3) The main reason, however, was that in the late 1950s anti-psychotic medication first became available. Now, when confronted with a disturbed patient, the doctor could zonk him with a pill rather than an ice pick.

You may find it difficult to believe this (I know I did), but Antonio Moniz was co-recipient of the 1949 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, which recognized his pioneering work in psychosurgery. I might add that, later, Moniz was partially paralyzed after being shot in the spine by a lobotomized patient.

Recently, the medical world has discovered nutrition. Cholesterol, in particular, has become anathema. It has gotten so that anyone who orders a prime cut of roast beef, with a tasty, fatty border, feels guilty as he senses the eyes of other diners staring at the waiter who serves him. Eggs for breakfast—a tradition in many homes—now seems an almost sinful indulgence. Cholesterol—so the medical profession would lead us to believe—is what causes the heart attacks and strokes that end so many American lives.

The facts are something else again. One study, done ten or fifteen years ago, compared two groups of patients in a mental hospital. Both groups received complete physical examinations. Then Group A was fed a low cholesterol diet, while Group B got the typical American diet, rich in cholesterol. At the end of five years both groups were re-examined.

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The incidence of arteriosclerosis was the same in both groups.

In 1984 the results of an extensive long-term study by many cooperating hospitals was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It delighted the anti-cholesterol doctors because it showed that after five years the incidence of coronary artery disease in a group of patients who took medications designed to lower blood cholesterol was lower than in those patients who did not take these drugs. Unfortunately, what was also mentioned—though certainly not emphasized—was that the death rates in the two groups were the same. Since the deaths of the drug takers were, in the main, attributed to accidents, the researchers chose to ignore them. However, in a letter to the *J.A.M.A.* (February 1985) a physician on the staff of the Helsinki University Psychiatric Clinic pointed out:

> There have recently been findings that impulsive homicidal and suicidal aspects can be connected with low cholesterol levels, although the exact reason for these findings is unclear. Also, low serum cholesterol levels have been found to be related to poorly internalized social norms, irresponsibility, and poor self-control. And one earlier coronary heart project, which used prisoners as a control group, found that the prisoners had very low cholesterol levels and small variance in cholesterol level. So "there is the possibility that the high figure of violent and accidental deaths was not a matter of chance but the result of cholesterol lowering or some metabolic aspects connected with this, making some males more prone to impulsive violent death.

The benefits gained from taking anti-cholesterol drugs (which are, incidentally, not only expensive but terribly distasteful) are perhaps more apparent than real. Instead of dying of a heart attack, you may die in a car accident; or, if you live, you might spend the rest of your life in prison. In fact, for those of us over age forty-five, a recently published study (*J.A.M.A.*, October 18, 1985) seems to make it not only useless but dangerous to try to avoid heart attacks. In this study 1,604 men between the ages of thirty-nine and fifty-four, all of whom were free of cardiovascular disease but who had at least one risk factor (i.e., elevated blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, obesity, cigarette smoking, etc.) were divided into two roughly equal groups. One group was given counseling and appropriate medication, including cholesterol-lowering drugs; the second group was left to go its merry way. Five years later the two groups were compared. The incidence of heart attacks in the treated group was twice as high as in the nontreated group (3.1% vs. 1.5%). Why? The investigators could only guess: "The possibility cannot be excluded that harmful side effects of the drugs used in the program outweighed the benefits of the improved risk factor profile."

I have no desire to belittle the researchers who are working so diligently to make our lives longer and more comfortable. I am simply

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advising readers that they should take medical news, particularly that which seems on the surface to be a bit farfetched, "cum grano salis," as Stephen Potter was wont to say. For example, recently we have been notified, on the basis of one study, that we may increase the chance of developing heart disease if we drink more than two cups of coffee a day. If you like coffee, and it doesn't bother you (give you heartburn, make you jumpy, or cause insomnia) then you should ignore this warning. The evidence that it will lead to heart disease is thin and equivocal at best. I would guess that within a year or two someone else will prove there is no correlation between coffee drinking and heart disease. Someone may even "prove" that coffee helps prevent heart attacks. (You may recall that about five years ago we were warned that coffee drinking might lead to cancer of the pancreas. That theory has long since been discarded.)

I would also ignore the dangers supposedly inherent in secondhand cigarette smoking. In fact, I do ignore it. I have heart disease—I have twice had coronary artery bypass operations, equipping me with six bypasses—and my wife smokes two packages of cigarettes a day, but I certainly have no intention of deserting our home to avoid the smoke that, I suppose, swirls in the air of our domicile. I simply don't believe it hurts me at all, and I have read nothing in the medical literature that persuades me to the contrary.

There are in the medical profession a good number of zealots. These doctors are absolutely convinced that they know the best rules for the human race to live by, from the physical point of view. (They are comparable to religious zealots who are certain they know how we should live morally and spiritually.) They don't lie—they don't even intentionally exaggerate—but their enthusiasm sometimes carries them away so that they claim more for their research than the results actually warrant. Because many of them are researchers in the academic world, they are eager to publish their results and, if possible, to be the first to do so. Sometimes, despite relatively close scrutiny by the editors of the medical journals, "breakthrough" material is published prematurely that later has to be recanted. One of the major monthly surgical journals used to run a regular "reappraisal" section in which some expert would take a second look at a "breakthrough" that had been published a year or two earlier. Often this reappraisal would amount to a negation of the previous article.

What may be most germane to readers of this article is this: At the moment there is no persuasive evidence that those of us leading lives of relative moderation can increase our well-being or prolong our lives by radically changing our style of living. Most of us know that it is not only unsightly but unhealthy to be grossly overweight; we all realize that at least a minimal amount of exercise is probably good for us; smoking

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three packages of cigarettes a day is certainly not going to do our health any good. But the evidence that moderate amounts of cholesterol will hurt us, that vigorous regular exercise will add to our longevity, or that two or three cigarettes a day will cause lung cancer simply does not exist.

Most of us pay little or no serious attention to the messages of the religious evangelists who flood the radio and television airwaves every Sunday morning. We should be equally wary of the medical evangelists. A white coat and a stethescope don't necessarily endow the owner with common sense.

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How We're Gonna Keep 'Em Off of the Farm

WILLIAM MUELLER

DO WE HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION to save the family farm? My father and uncle believed they were saving farmers when they founded Sunray Fertilizer Company in the mid-1950s. Not only were they first to bring anhydrous ammonia to Iowa, but they were the first emissaries of what became the Green Revolution. It took them years to bring farmers around. These farmers were not agricultural-college graduates. They were not regular readers of the farming journals—they had too little time for that. Nor had they been loosened up and made receptive by county extension courses, which were taught by people who at that time either worked with impoverished families or gave cooking classes. Neither had the local farmers any direct contact with the expanding network of agricultural scientists. The Mueller brothers were missionaries, in every sense of the word, to this dubious group, who were suspicious of all things unnatural or scientific; and of course liquid nitrogen, as anhydrous ammonia is called, is as unnatural as it is possible to get: pressurized, so cold it burns, able to blind you in moments. Many farmers thought the Mueller brothers were stark raving mad.

My father and uncle had a vision. Certainly they hoped to earn some money from Sunray Fertilizer, but there was so much more at stake here. Both brothers had been born in the back room of a farmhouse. They lived with slime, mud, death, blood, rust, decay, and manure. Always manure. Manure is what distinguished country boys at school. Manure is what city boys pointed out about their country cousins: shit kickers. Blessed with intelligence and drive, these brothers would look closely at a system that claimed the life of their sister and gave their father nothing back for his years of hard work except free and clear title to the land; and it made the brothers dream of faraway businesses and faraway careers.

While in the prosperous business of selling bottled gas in Cedar

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Rapids, with a virtual monopoly in the town, my uncle learned of this new stuff, this petroleum by-product the gas industry had concocted, called anhydrous ammonia. Without even waiting for the scientific reports, which his agricultural mind well understood already, he shared his dream with my father. The brothers would seek out the epicenter of rich farmland—Hardin County, Iowa—to begin the grand experiment. They saw it as deliverance from the mire, from the manure, from nature's limitations. They would offer farmers the means to redefine agriculture.

Of course farmers came around to accepting liquid nitrogen. In fact, when yields began shooting up, farmers reacted exactly the way a drug addict would respond: they begged for more, far more than the soil tests indicated. The revolution spread. Sons were dispatched to agricultural colleges, data began streaming in, and the vast petrochemical industry realized they finally had the ultimate pigeon. Liquid nitrogen would spawn a constellation of allied developments in farming whose cumulative effect was to place farmers on an ever-narrowing path. Certainly if ever anyone was being saved, during this period it was the family farmer. Because of liquid nitrogen a farmer could boost his yields by 100, even 200 percent. Because of liquid nitrogen he could use those profits to buy more land. Because of liquid nitrogen and the chemicals that followed, he could farm far more than he ever had before. And because of the chemically dependent farmstead, he could at last operate commercially on a large scale—not simply getting by, but earning good money and raising kids *and* accumulating assets for the future. No longer pulling a manure spreader, he embraced the latest technology.

Farmers scrambled to become big-time operators, and that scramble included what agricultural historians saw as the last great shakeout of farming's obsolete. Between the 1950s and the 1960s, *seven million* part-time and tenant farmers would leave. Taking their farm families with them, these obsolete farmers moved to small rural towns or went a little farther, to urban centers. Most of them became the backbone of the blue-collar class in the Midwest. From their time on the farm they had learned values that served them well in other fields. Their lands were now farmed by a shrinking nucleus of serious commercial family farmers, around whom grew a matrix of services, agencies, industries, and research centers that eventually represented one-fourth of the entire work force in this country. As each support group made its presence known to the farming community, it maintained that its express reason for existence was to save the family farmer.

It is difficult to establish precisely the point at which all these efforts to save the family farm soured. Farmers were quick to rename themselves "managers" and to develop "sound management practices." The terms are important here. Farming has historically been not merely a

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trade but a way of life, one based on moral and ethical principles. The American farmer is simply not erudite in voicing the transcendent value of what he is doing; he tends to think in more mundane terms: history, tradition, natural necessity, pride, respect for the past. These were qualities that the Mueller brothers encountered in trying to peddle liquid nitrogen. They had to overcome a legacy based on the notion that you respected forces greater than yourself. But the term "manager" detached farmers from their commitment to the ethics behind land and livestock. To manage is to control. To manage is to be responsible. To manage is to follow rules that are in existence for a reason. You do not need to explain to the family or neighbors why it was necessary to destroy the 110-year-old barn—good farm management required it. You do not have to explain why you are moving to wider corn rows and buying a huge four-hundred-horsepower tractor and renting out an additional six hundred acres of land: it is simply good farm management. Nor are ethics involved in the confining of hundreds of hogs. You guessed it: that is good farm management.

What was going on was that farmers were trying to separate the way they farmed from the act of being a farmer. They presumed that, like factory workers or office employees, they could be innovative with their acreage while remaining family farmers at home. Which is to say, they could still have the values of family farming: believing in the work ethic, remaining stewards of the soil, appreciative of history and family, lovers of nature, and innocent. Honest. Neighborly. Solid. It was precisely to save these things and perpetuate them forever that farmers undertook the revolution of their profession, accepting the tools and methods handed to them by such services as those the Mueller brothers and others who followed them provided. With each choice, however, came a trade-off, a moral confrontation that may have been completely ignored at the time.

Today the remaining farmers realize that not only has the way farming gets done changed, but so has the institution of the family farmer. In freeing farmers from the powers of nature, those who would save the family farm have only insured that the farmer serves them. Each new effort to save the family farm really means a non-farm benefactor profits while farmers lose not only income, but their principles. Each step now takes farmers further away from their heritage, making them more like those they despise.

The question one needs to address is not so much whether we have a moral obligation to save family farms as units as whether we have an obligation to preserve the family farm way of life. As economic units, family farms can be large corporate entities. Family farms can also include very small farmsteads, where one or both adults hold off-farm

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jobs. The economics of farming today encourages both of these possibilities for the farmer. What I am suggesting is that, with increasing regularity, it is difficult to act in ways that encourage the family farm environment. Both for small farms that have significant off-farm income and for very large farms that are diversified, there is tremendous advantage in exploiting the farm economically. The large operation can install single-purpose farm buildings, such as hog confinements, that are eligible for rapid depreciation allowances. The farmer raises hogs, in other words, not because the world needs pork or because he has a better way to raise pigs, but because he can use the tax credit against profits in another area.

The small farmers have not shown any profits since the 1970s, but their number continually grows. Why? Because the net losses sustained on the farm lower one's taxes on off-farm earnings. In calendar year 1982, farm profits were estimated at $7.7 billion, while losses for tax purposes were $19.0 billion; and off-farm income amounted to 105 percent for these same farmers. Similarly, federal subsidy programs lure farmers into planting the same overproduced cash crops year after year.

The temptations to "federal crop" in unethical ways are tremendous, particularly for the large and medium-sized farmer. Price-support systems have been exploited by unethical farmers who plant poorly germinating field corn (not expensive hybrid seed) and receive compensation on the amount their yield is below the county average. That scheme drives down the total county average and penalizes their honest neighbors for overproducing, in which case they lose guaranteed payment. Other large farms buy up neighboring wood lots that have been nurtured for decades, contract them out to loggers, reaping an investment credit, and then declare that the razed ground was intended for cash crops, but they will hold them out of production—for which the government pays them. That's blackmail. The latest scheme began when the 1985 Farm Bill introduced the whole-herd dairy buy-out. By a stroke of luck, the program takes eighteen months to complete—just enough time for unscrupulous dairymen to bring to maturity thousands of heifers they will claim were going to be their dairy stock, which everyone knows would have been culled from the herd otherwise. What would have been veal or hamburger then earns that farmer an annual income for five years, as he is paid *not* to milk a cow he never planned to milk.

Of course not every farmer wants to exploit the system. Yet today the majority of family farmers struggle to stay free from compromise. It is becoming increasingly difficult to farm honestly and make a living at it. Those family farmers who follow their ethical principles are the ones now being forced off their farms. Because they believe in the work ethic, these farmers try to avoid becoming welfare cases. They will work

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mightily to produce corn that costs them over three dollars a bushel to grow, but that sells for a dollar less on the open market. In the process they become the kind of farmers they have detested all their lives. Whereas years ago they would have rested their land in pasture, they now continuously plant corn. They will put off tiling wet spots; they will no longer build terraces; and they cannot afford the luxury of seeding down a winter cover to protect against wind erosion. End rows and the margins of creeks and other wild habitats will be plowed up for those extra bushels they can produce. Some desperate farmers will take one-time gambles on high yields and use even more chemicals, which further damage the soil and contribute to an already chronic pollution problem. Others who cannot afford chemicals will farm by neglect, accelerating erosion and inviting plagues of pests and weeds. These stewards of the soil look over their handiwork with shame and anger because of their lack of choices. This is not the legacy they had envisioned for their children.

It is difficult to say which case is more tragic: the family farmer who recognizes the corruptions of the system and learns how to exploit food and land to his advantage; or the farmer who persists in being the kind of farmer he admires, who is systematically ground to dust. Many of the latter will never understand why they failed. They equate twenty-hour days with a man's worth. They look at their value within the society and believe that, if there is a fair God somewhere, then they ought to be paid. Their ethics are such that even though they readily see their value in the system, they are loath to accept charity. Again and again they plea just for a fair market price. They lament how hard it is to earn a living in this system.

Thus to the end they can be easily exploited by those who claim to save the family farm, but who instead only serve their own interests. Out of their sense of responsibility, these ethical family farmers have again and again been misled. They purchased land because bankers told them it was wise to leverage themselves into a higher debt structure. They bought new equipment because agricultural experts told them that to buy this year was the only shelter against next year's inflation and that expansion was the way of the future. They believed in those things. They applied their share of what is an annual ten-billion-dollar farm chemical bill, putting the liquid nitrogen on their fields, and tried to sort through the cacophony of dissenting voices that steered them to and fro.

Adding to the confusion has been the fact that the intent of those who serve agriculture has nothing to do with the malignancy of the outcome they achieve. Like the Mueller brothers, virtually all agricultural scientists labor for five, ten, or twenty years on projects to save the family farmer. I recently spoke to one of the soil scientists who as a young man

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got in on the early anhydrous ammonia research. At that time the excitement within his group ran high. Now, like many of the eight thousand other scientists within USDA, he is greatly disillusioned and troubled by what their work engendered. Theirs is good science gone bad; honorable men who overlooked the use of their work for wrongful purposes. Today, across the country, a group of scientists is trying to reverse some of this by developing alternative agricultural techniques. But the whole process of agricultural science is ideally structured to be exploited by service industries. It plods forward slowly, demanding infinite retesting and analysis. Meanwhile some of its findings are snatched up by industry to be rushed into the field, while others, which favor farmers over processors and agri-industries, will grow only in out-of-the-way agricultural stations and be reported in obscure official publications.

The release of agricultural advances saves the family farmer in theory, but it destroys thousands of farms in reality. The most recent example of this involves the introduction on the market of genetically engineered bacteria that stimulate a bovine growth hormone, resulting in dramatic increases in milk production. This bacteria will increase production from 10 to 40 percent for the cattle subjected to it. This comes at precisely the same time that the government is prepared to spend $1.8 billion to buy out dairy herds. The combined effect of these separate events will be to convince small family farmers to get out of the dairy business while huge corporate dairy farms thrive—precisely the opposite effect that scientists envisioned when they began work on this bacteria years ago. Good science, bad timing.

Entwined with the well-intentioned, if toxic, efforts to save the family farm are some insidious strategies to bleed them until they perish. One needs to begin with the four vast grain cartels that manipulate prices in so many ways that farmers are knocked completely out of the supply-and-demand formula. Consider 1983 when the government's Payment In Kind (PIK) program idled nearly half of all production acres. That same year the Midwest was hit with its worst drought in a decade. Yet at year's end, prices were stable for corn and beans, and the USDA reported there was *still* a surplus on hand. How could that be? The National Farmers Organization discovered that millions of metric tons of grain were imported by the grain cartels to create an artificial surplus. That year marked the end for tens of thousands of farmers, while the non-farming public fumed over "welfare farmers." This same predatory mentality has existed with farm implements and chemicals as well as with the financial services in the private and public sector.

What disturbs farmers most is the growing realization that predatory agricultural services have been aided and abetted by long-trusted farm

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institutions. For decades, the Extension Service worked with individual farmers to educate them on the job, to bring to smart farmers methods that would make them better farmers, and to help raise the quality of life for all farmers. Today the Extension Service is computer-operated, locked in to delivering seminars and group meetings where their effectiveness is measured by head count. Each agent has to file reports on how his or her time was spent; and the software for the filing, as well as the data that the agents can deliver to the farmer, is severely controlled by federal bureaucrats. An agent who was nationally recognized for his effectiveness recently quit in disgust. He could find nothing within the Extension literature to give to his farmers who wanted to use low-chemical, organic farming methods; and the time he spent with these organic farmers was considered by his superiors to be wasted time. Similarly, farmers have sent their children off to agricultural colleges only to discover that the modern methods destroy three generations of careful building. Most tragic of all is the realization that thousands of family farmers have made agonizing decisions to bend to the new technologies, to grow larger, to cultivate intensively, to accept, if you will, "corruption"—and they are still destroyed. With each passing year, even the "luxury" to accept corruption (and continue as a farmer) has been removed for many family farmers. But it is in the farmer's character to continue working until the last equipment has been sold and the sheriff stands with bill in hand—until he is finally free of our efforts to save him.

The identity most people assign to the "we" in the question "Do we have a moral obligation to save family farmers?" is the federal government. It is clear that the permanent institutions created to serve farmers are not working. Repeatedly, critics of USDA in Congress have dragged bureaucrats of that agency before hearings and asked, "Whose interests does USDA serve?" In true criminal fashion these public servants have never broken down, even in the face of staggering evidence that USDA serves the interests of agribusiness or super-farm owners and often hastens the demise of family farmers. USDA has opposed alternative agricultural research. USDA has done little to help farmers develop markets. USDA has always had a cumbersome and self-serving system for distributing to farmers its research findings. But it is difficult to conceive of anything generated within the government more harmful than the 1985 Farm Bill that will be enforced for a period of five years. Critics of the bill, such as Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, estimate that the provisions in it will force up to 40 percent of all family farmers out of business before it expires. An independent study conducted by the Office of Technology Assessment found that this bill, in conjunction with other factors influencing farming, will, by the year 2000, eliminate a

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million of the 2.2 million farms we now have. What will be left is about 50,000 large farms producing 75 percent of all food, and the rest will be small farms used for residences, alternative products, truck farms, and of course as tax shelters. As is now the case, farm subsidies will be largely given to the largest farm units.

The current legislation has three areas that are particularly harmful to family farmers. The crop-subsidy provisions offer very low compensation to farmers in comparison to market values for their grain. By signing up to limit their production, they are gambling that market values for grain will stay depressed and that they will get just enough from a subsidy check to make ends meet and pay off interest on their loans. But, for large farmers, the restrictions on planting are lifted when they exceed the 900-acre level, and they can both receive payment and hedge with additional planting.

Pushed by environmentalist groups, the 1985 Farm Bill included the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which is eventually to turn seventy-five million acres of erodible farmland into pasture and timberland. But response to the program by farmers has been very poor. They were obliged to submit bids to the government on what it would cost them to take their acres out of production and seed the ground with cover from USDA's approved list. Funds were rationed on a county level, and farmers in essence bid against one another, with low bids receiving the awards. (USDA regularly pits farmers against one another in this fashion.) One-fifth of the eligible acres were represented in the farmers' response, with bid levels unacceptable to USDA.

What is disturbing here is not simply that the government has once again miscalculated America's farmers. Within the conservation provisions there is also the stipulation that farmers reduce their soil erosion and nonpoint pollution of the environment. The Conservation Reserve Program in effect says to farmers: we are offering you what we think is a solution to soil erosion. Now that farmers have rejected this, the long-ripening adversarial conflict between the farming community and environmentalists will begin to erupt. Farmers who of necessity must farm their land in ways that cause erosion and pollution will now be environmental outlaws. The evidence against them will be clear, and EPA will move in to force compliance. Should this become a regulatory issue, with fines and sanctions attached, I have no doubt the family farmer will once again suffer.

Most perverse in the 1985 Farm Bill is the Dairy Reduction Program alluded to earlier. Here, counties are allotted a lump sum, based on their production of milk, and dairymen again bid against one another to capture some of these funds. The government is hoping to rid us of more than a million cows by the end of an eighteen-month period, which will

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allow the government to ease out of the milk price-support business. So far, the predictable has occurred. There is very little sign-up among the larger dairy producers and considerable sign-up with those small, family farm operations. In other words, family farmers are sending their cows to slaughter, while the serious producers who already over-produce milk are waiting to cash in on deregulation. So much for saving family farms.

Remember, too, that dairymen who agree to get out of the business for the five years stipulated do not have a wide range of alternatives. The relation of land size to income in dairy farms is unique. These farms exist best where other kinds of farms do not, usually in more rocky soil. Neither are dairy sheds very useful for the way beef or hogs are raised today. And of course dairy machinery is of no use without a cow attached to it. These small farms will have a very hard time indeed converting to grain or other livestock operations—without the great obstacle of taking on additional debts. Many of them are now signing up for the program because it offers quick revenues that come at a time when they have no credit or face additional investment costs to stay in the dairy business.

I think this buy-out of dairy cattle is a perfect metaphor for the full range of governmental programs offered to the farmer. Invariably when the government offers some assistance, it does so with provisos, with corrosive repercussions, and so positions the assisted farmer that he immediately becomes an adversary to other farmers. In this case, the appearance of more than a million cows on the market drives down the price for beef cows and effects hog prices as well. It also attacks the fundamentals of farming. Here are dairymen, who may be third or even fourth generation in the business, who deal with their cows from ten to fifteen years; their artistry is in understanding their animals more intimately than their competition does—a challenge they heartily embrace. They have culled from the line the lesser cows and kept the superior ones. They have watched their cows and know the moods of each cow in her seasons. They have sat up all night with a cow to turn a calf inside, and they have applied healing salves to her torn udder. And, should anyone suggest that the cows do not understand their place in the scheme of life, I would have them sit with me in my office each afternoon as the cattle, who are twenty yards away at the fence and listening to my radio with me, turn toward home. They do not need the beginning of "All Things Considered" to tell them the time. The same cow always leads and the rest follow, across the creek and up the hill and even into the stanchions—the same ones each morning and each night.

Consider, too, how this is all being handled. After making the choice to abandon your way of life, you are obligated by the government to *brand on the face* these lifelong friends. Then you take them down to the market where the buyers, mindful of your contractual agreement, have

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been offering as little as one-fifth the value of beef cattle, or a dime a pound. If this were not bitter irony enough, the government masterfully unveils its plan to support and subsidize an Irish investment group that is setting up a twenty-thousand-cow dairy operation in Georgia. Every drop of milk will be bought by the government. It does not save family farms to toss them lifelines to which are attached non-negotiable contracts requiring them to take the next step toward quitting farming altogether.

It is often suggested that the loss of family farmers witnessed in the past several years, which will culminate in a system devoid of them sometime around the year 2000, is a natural evolution. What distinguishes the current exodus from those of earlier periods, such as those of the Southern sharecropper, the Appalachian tobacco hand, or even the Midwestern tenant farmer, is the context. Sharecroppers were not more efficient than the methods that replaced them. But family farmers are the most efficient farmers in the world. Tobacco hands were not as innovative, flexible, or cheap as the machines that took their place; but family farmers have the lowest operational costs of any size farming unit; and the typical family farmer has the skills of a dozen trades, crafts, and professions. Finally, those earlier displacements resulted in continued cheap goods for the consumer.

Evidence suggests that if control of food is concentrated into fifty thousand units around the country, food prices will soar. At this time American consumers pay 12 percent of their disposable income for food. Were it not for family farmers, who shun billions of dollars in set-aside grants each year because, as one farmer told me, "Getting paid to not farm is not what I am about," control of produce would drive prices much higher. Were it not for family farmers, erosion and nonpoint pollution would reach the critical state. Because of family farmers there are hundreds of commercial banks still in existence, which could just as easily have been closed down if more farmers had filed bankruptcy or withheld repayments. The family farm has saved us, not the other way around. They exist despite our efforts to "save" them; but each new effort, like the 1985 Farm Bill, must sound to them as Santa Anna's trumpets sounded to the fading defenders of the Alamo.

Americans have distanced themselves from the ethics and morals of food production, save where it serves them to think nostalgically about family farms as the source of our better values. Little wonder that the *New York Times* poll finds a majority of Americans seeing farm life as superior to any other kind of life in this country. As consumers, Americans have enjoyed relatively inexpensive food. What will we do without the family farmer to watch over the system for us, to be our dupes and to create that pleasant situation through their own great

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discomfort? The government, in its Farm Bill and USDA leadership, is indicating that it will deregulate farming after it has finished destroying it. Consumers will be left with farms that are owned by absentee investment consortiums, insurance companies, or groups of professionals. Farming does not need ethics to continue. But farmers have always chosen this hard life precisely because it offered them the combination of making a living and living ethically. Until the Green Revolution, in fact, they had little choice but to be ethical. Now the ethical component is in danger of being lost, even while family farms are presumed to be saved.

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Firecrackers At Christmas

ROBERT MORGAN

In the South and mountains, our big
serenade was not the Fourth but
always Christmas Eve and Christmas.
Starting at midnight the valleys
and branch coves fairly shook with bark
of crackers, boom of shotguns, jolt
even of sticks of dynamite.
You would have thought a new hunting
season had begun in the big-star
night, or that a war had broken
out in the scattered hollows: all
the feuds and land disputes come to
a magnum finale. The sparks
everywhere of match and fuse
and burst were like giant lightning bugs.
Thunder doomed the ridges though
the sky shone clear and frost sugared
the meadows. Yankees were astonished
at the violence and racket
on the sacred day, they said, as
cherry bombs were hurled into yards
and placed, expanding mailboxes,
same as Halloween. Perhaps the custom
had its origins in peasant-pagan
times of honoring the solstice
around a burning tree, or in
the mystery centuries of
saluting the miraculous with

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loudest brag and syllable.
Certainly the pioneer had
no more valuable gift to bring
than lead and powder to offer
in the hush of hills, the long rifles
their best tongues for saying the peace
they claimed to bring into the still
unchapelled wilderness, just as
cannon had been lit in the Old
World to announce the birth of kings.
They fired into the virgin skies
a ceremony we repeated
ignorantly. But what delight
I felt listening in the unheated
bedroom dark, not believing in
Santa Claus or expensive gifts,
to the terrible cracks along
the creek road and up on Olivet,
as though great rivers of ice were
breaking on the horizon and
trees were bursting at the heart
and new elements were being born
in whip-stings and distant booms
and the toy chatter of the littlest
powder grace notes. That was our
roughest and best caroling.

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On a Photograph of Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein

J. R. SOLONCHE

Although it looks as if they
Only shared a dirty joke,

Still one wonders what they
Talked about, these two world

Champion tramps, physicist and
Funnyman, shoulder to shoulder,

Smiling for the camera like
Foundling brothers reunited

After living all their lives
Apart, posing like ancient

Tribal enemies caught in the act
Of compromise, a secret summit

Meeting of the sublime and the
Ridiculous as though the gods,

Jealous of such amity, had
Blackmail on their minds. But

They know better, standing
Together, their twinkling eyes

Admitting nothing but universal
Laughter, ridiculous and sublime.

J. R. SOLONCHE's poems have appeared in the *Literary Review*, the *Wisconsin Review*, *Yankee*, and other journals.

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An American Childhood in the Dominican Republic

JULIA ALVAREZ

ALTHOUGH I WAS RAISED in the Dominican Republic by Dominican parents in an extended Dominican family, mine was an American childhood. Technically, I am American, for I was born in New York City and lived there for three weeks before my parents returned "home," their first emigration having failed owing to my mother's homesickness. That technicality of birth, however, would not have amounted to anything but paper citizenship if it hadn't been backed up by a sense of the honor and privilege the certificate conferred on me. "Just remember," my father explained to my older sister and me. "You could become president. You were born there." My mother referred to her first two daughters as her *Americanitas* and to the last two as *criollas* (homemade). My cousins would often ask me what I remembered about living in that magic land. I'd claim to recall a great many things from those first three weeks. Only once did my memory fail me, when I said that snow came in several colors.

When my parents returned to the Dominican Republic right after I was born, they moved into a house on my grandparents' property, where the extended family lived—grandparents, uncles, aunts, a band of cousins—all of us fans of the Americans. My mother's family had had money for a while, and in the last three generations—what with half-a-dozen revolutions, changes of governments, as well as hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes, and several American marine occupations—they had learned that a good education is the best investment. The sons and daughters were sent off to the United States to boarding schools. Upon graduation, the girls were brought home because too much schooling might spoil them for marriage. The sons went on to good colleges—Cornell, Yale, Brown. I heard discussions at the dinner table among my grandfather (an old Cornell man) and my young uncles: Was Yale as good

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as Harvard? Why had Uncle been wait-listed at Princeton and yet accepted at Brown? Ours could have been any collegiate household in New England discussing over the dinner table where to send the boys to school.

My grandmother thought all this fancy education a waste of money. What you had to learn from books was your alphabet and your numbers; the rest life taught you for nothing. It was because of her that the girls came home after high school. She had her own reasons for loving the United States. Spoiled all her life, first by a doting father, then by a devoted husband, she found herself thwarted now by her over-caring family, who lived in the surrounding houses, supervising her diet, her drinking, her smoking, her mischief. But my grandmother was not about to be cheated of an old age of interesting vice. She'd leave it to my grandfather to be the saint in the family. Her only recourse was to get away from her children, and since she hated the countryside, her only other option was a trip to New York.

My grandfather kept an apartment in the city, where he had a long-standing appointment as cultural attaché to the United Nations, a post awarded to him because he was a graduate of an American university, spoke perfect English, and was considered something of an authority on the United States. He went north every year for a couple of months, but only reluctantly, since without his supervision, his business was more likely to come under the dictator Trujillo's regulations and levies and out-and-out stealing. But after months and months of my grandmother's nagging, Grandfather would give in, and off they'd go to New York for several months. Years ago, my grandmother had fallen off a chair while cleaning a window and had broken her back, and it seemed only her American doctor knew how to ease her pain. While my grandfather attended meetings at the United Nations, Grandmother was off to see her Doctor Thompson. Or so everyone thought, until an acquaintance spotted her, stumbling down Broadway, quite drunk. The family was shocked to find out my grandmother spent most afternoons playing the slot machines at Fascination and drinking at the bar next door. My father, "only an Island doctor," was proved right after all: he had diagnosed my grandmother's depressions when she returned home after months away as withdrawal from alcohol and nicotine, but no one believed him until then.

From New York my grandmother always brought back duffel bags of presents for her grandchildren. Once I got a rag doll, as tall as I, with straps on her hands and feet so I could dance with her, one-two-three, one-two-three. I also received a drum with two drumsticks stored in its hollow center that headachy aunts were always threatening to take away if I didn't "drum quietly." To instill in us the value of putting money away for a rainy day, my grandmother once brought back mechanical banks. They tricked us into saving, for only a coin could make the

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jump-roping girl skip and the wire loop turn a circle over her head. Jonah fell out of a boat and into the whale's mouth as often as you pleased, for a penny. The banks' workings seemed magic, and whenever I inserted a coin, pulled the lever, and my little man raised his arm and his little dog jumped for the bone, I made a wish: someday soon, may I go to live in the United States.

My grandmother also brought back clothes for her grandchildren—impractical things, such as gorgeous party dresses that were too dressy for any occasion, bikinis that we couldn't wear in public, frilly socks. My aunts and uncles bought everyday clothes for my cousins during their own trips to New York, and my sisters and I wore their hand-me-downs until my mother learned to sew, for she could no longer afford buying trips or ready-made clothes. She had married a man "from a humble family," a term that back then in the Dominican Republic meant a family that had supported the wrong side of a revolution. Though they had lost their fortune to the new administration, my father's family still retained the manners and morals of the rich: the girls gave birth to their babies after the wedding; the boys attended the university in the capital, receiving a local, if not a fancy foreign, education. My father had been the exception. He had been in some trouble he wouldn't talk about back when he was a young man and had been forced to leave the country. He ended up going to medical school in Canada, earning his pocket money by selling pints of his blood to the Red Cross during those war years. "A hardworking man," I heard him described by my uncles and aunts. "A good man."

"A good-for-nothing!" my grandmother would retort. She was the only one of my mother's family who did not approve of my father. It had less to do with my father's flawed character or family background than with his correct diagnosis of her alcoholism, which had brought her New York trips to a stop.

"Better to be happily divorced than sadly married," she would advise my mother when my father was around to overhear her and get his feelings hurt.

"Now, Mother, you know perfectly well I'm happy."

"Just looking poorly, I guess." Liquor had not dulled the sharpness of my grandmother's tongue.

Although we were the poor relations on the compound, we were as nicely dressed if not better dressed than my cousins. My mother had ordered a Singer sewing machine from a mail-order catalog and had become a crack seamstress, able to copy my cousins' brand-new, store-bought outfits exactly. Often she improved upon the originals with accessories from leftover swatches of material: book bags and kerchiefs and hatbands and caps and ribbons. Ours looked like the store-bought

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outfits! Although she was proud of her handiwork, and if pushed would confess that, yes, she had made them herself, my mother cut out the Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's, and Gimbels' labels from my cousins' hand-me-downs and sewed them onto the clothes she had made by hand.

At home, we ate Dominican. There was no American substitute for *asopao* or *arroz con avichuelas* or *mangu con salchichas* or *moro y gandules*. In fact, one of the only criticisms I heard against the Americans was that their cuisine was so bland. But my mother's preoccupation with "balanced meals," her fear of vitamin deficiencies, and her terror of germs in the kitchen had been learned in a home economics course in her American boarding school. She was sure her daughters would not survive childhood, for we were skinny kids, and all of us were finicky eaters. At the table she courted our appetites as if we were tourists whom she was introducing to the native cuisine. She'd nod to the meal, wrapped in plantain leaves. "That's a very popular *campesino* dish from where your father was born."

All we knew was that *that* was not pizza, not spaghetti and meatballs, the only two meals we considered edible. We untied the string and the plantain leaf fell open. "What's inside?" we asked, making a face at whatever it was.

"All sorts of good things for you—that's why the *campesinos* up north are all so tall and healthy and live to be eighty!"

We peered closer at the ground meat and mashed plantain. Tall was something we aspired to be, but healthy seemed a synonym for being alive, and eighty was centuries away from age five.

"Eat it up!" she ordered, and for a moralizing example she didn't have to go clear around the world to China like American mothers. Just down the street at La Plaza, the beggar children would have given anything . . .

We had no trouble being convinced to finish our breakfast: a box of American cornflakes we ate flake by flake—why ruin a good bowl of cereal by sogging it up with milk? The hated milk that had the calcium that was good for our bones came afterwards, in a tall glass, made palatable with heaping tablespoons of chocolate powder from a yellow and brown Nestles tin. Once, Grandmother brought back a tin of strawberry powder, which in and of itself eaten on the sly by spoonfuls was delicious, but American or not, I could not stomach pink milk.

We ended up using that strawberry powder to flavor the ice cream we cranked out on my grandparents' ice-cream machine, with everyone who wanted a scoop taking a turn. It wasn't really work, but rather something fun to do on Saturday mornings up at the big house. Then, some Americans opened an ice-cream parlor a block away from the hospital my father directed. On weekends, we'd accompany him on his rounds,

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enduring the smells, the horrible needles and IV contraptions, the cheek pinchings by patients' families, because afterwards there was always a stop at the parlor for cones. The red-and-white striped awnings gave the storefront a festive air; we opened the door and a blast of cold air greeted us; through a glass counter, we gazed down longingly at vat after vat of ice cream. Why churn for hours at home only to get a creamy vanilla soup or pale pink glob when here we could order Marshmallow Chocolate, Heavenly Hash, Peppermint Pleasure, exotic green Pistachio, and Chocolate Chip, which we mispronounced, "Chocolate Ships."

About this time, American businesses and shops were cropping up all over Ciudad Trujillo, as the capital had been renamed in honor of El Jefe, our dictator. The shops catered to a growing community of American advisors, businessmen, and fortune seekers who had been drawn to the country by the cheap labor and tax breaks offered by Trujillo to his good friends up north. This was the decade of the fifties, "The Era of Prosperity," as Trujillo had proclaimed it. In addition to the ice-cream parlor, there was a new car dealership, Buchanan Motors, where we bought our blue Oldsmobile, and an outdoor movie theater, the Olympic, where we went once to see a Western. (In the middle of the cavalry rescue, a tropical downpour obscured the besieged wagon train in the desert.) There was also the American school started by a diplomat's wife, Carol Morgan; and since Mrs. Morgan was friends with my mother and aunts, we children were allowed to attend her school even though it was, technically, for *los niños Americanos*.

Our cornflakes and other American foods came from a new grocery store about three blocks down from my grandparents' compound; it was located in a residential neighborhood, but zoning laws did not apply to Americans with cash. Besides, Wimpy's was as elegant-looking a storefront as most of the houses on the block: its picture windows tinted like sunglasses, its parking lot spacious enough to accommodate most of the cars the Buchanans had sold. No garish sign announced that this was Wimpy's. Instead, on the glass itself in dashing script was his signature—*Wimpy's*, the tail of the *y* underlining the whole word. To get inside, one stepped in front of a door—and then my mother rolled her eyes, waved her hand like a wand, and ordered, "Abracadabra!"—and the door swung open. I tried it, and the door opened for me as well. But I noted as I stood by, studying the workings of magic, that the door opened for anyone, even the little beggar boys who tried to get in to push shoppers' carts around for a nickel and were shooed out by a red-faced Mr. Wimpy. I lost interest in such an undiscriminating piece of witchcraft.

At first, it seemed poor Mr. Wimpy had taken on more than he had bargained for when, in his hometown in Illinois, he had envisioned the first modern grocery store on the small tropical island he had once

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invaded as a marine. He was a short, stout man, pink as strawberry milk and bald as an egg. Often his face turned bright pink with annoyance, for he couldn't seem to get his crew of Dominican boys properly trained. He had given them crew cuts, put them in clean white shirts and navy trousers, tied white chefs' aprons on the meat-counter and produce boys, but still they reverted to their old ways. Up and down the aisles, they raced his carts, yelling prices across the shelves as if this were the open-air market. Out back in the storeroom, they sold *loteria* tickets and who knows what else. They played the cash registers in time with the merengue music blaring from the radios, improvising enough *void*s and wrong *total*s to keep poor Mr. Wimpy busy correcting errors all day. There were unasked-for commentaries on one's purchases. What was Mrs. Granville going to do with all those cans of cling peaches? Wasn't that Mrs. Martin's eighth bottle of ketchup in two weeks? (The American embassy was doing a lot of barbecuing those days for investors, advisors, wheeler-dealers, and their homesick wives.)

In a matter of months, however, Wimpy whipped his boys into an all-out professional crew with voices so hushed that one had to lean forward hoping to hear what one owed. The store became the rage among the international set and the aristocratic families. Everyone who was anyone shopped at Wimpy's, and the reunions all up and down the breakfast cereals-*galletas*-crackers-*cassave*-soft drinks-cocktail olives and cherries-*jugos en latas*-jello-cake mix aisles created worse traffic jams than in any of the broad, new avenues of the capital, where there were still relatively few private automobiles—though Mr. Buchanan was changing all that.

My mother could not afford to do more than incidental shopping at Wimpy's. I'd accompany her to the open-air market where we'd wind our way between the crowded stalls and blankets laid out with bowls made of dried gourds, piled high with rice and beans, heaps of ripe mangoes and oranges, stacks of tortillas and moist, white mountain-goat cheeses. There were also small cooking stoves, around which women squatted, frying *pastelitos* or making coffee in a sock. Stray dogs and beggar boys scavenged the surrounding gutters for something to eat.

I held on to my mother's skirt as she wrangled and bartered over prices; and when finally a purchase was made, the oranges or yucca roots or pineapples were put in an empty rice sack and carted around for us by our boy, one of dozens of little boys crowding around shoppers with their empty sacks. Ours was named Johnny, a hazel-eyed, light-skinned boy who was quiet and hardworking and my age, though he was smaller and acted much older than I. Most of his right ear was missing from where, he told my mother, a dog had bitten him in a disagreement over something appetizing they had both found in the gutter. At the market,

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I saw where the foods I ate came from, not like at Wimpy's where everything poured from a can or peeled from a wrapper or popped out of a bottle. Here the hens clucked frantically in their crowded pens, the eggs were warm when deposited in my hand, the mangoes were still sticky with resin, and the bananas hung from a beam, a yellow chandelier. Unfortunately, I sometimes heard our veal dinner bawling in terror in the slaughterhouse next door.

On the way home, Mother could not resist stopping at Wimpy's "to pick up a few things," she said, though mostly she wanted to compare and boast about how much she had saved by not shopping there. As Wimpy's became more popular and more expensive, she grew indignant. Partly, it was her cool treatment at the hands of Wimpy's boys, who behaved towards the incidental native shopper with great condescension.

"Do you need a bag for these, *Doña*?" the bag boy would ask, staring down at the box of cereal and the small bottle of Tabasco sauce.

"Yes, of course," my mother responded crisply.

The bag boy bowed slightly, then turned to me. "I'll take that cart, *Muchachita*" (little girl). I blushed, for I knew we should not have used up a whole cart for our two small purchases. (American and other nice young ladies were addressed as Señorita Linda or Señorita Elizabeth or Miss Wendy, not as a generic *little girl*.) Still, it was worth the rebuff, for pushing that little cart around the store was like a ride at an amusement park, one of the few free treats at Wimpy's.

Back home, my mother would challenge anyone in the family to "the taste test." On a tray she'd set out two plates arranged with saltine crackers or bricks of gold cheese. "Now guess which is the American brand?" We sampled, narrowing our eyes in discrimination. If we confused the American product for a native brand, she gloated, her point proved. (Wimpy is a crook!) If we guessed the American brand was superior, she urged us to try the test again until we had to concede that there was no difference at all between the two brands.

But education was a different matter. My mother had no faith in Dominican schools. "You don't learn to think. They teach by rote." She enrolled her daughters in Carol Morgan's school where we began each day by pledging allegiance to the flag of the United States, which I much preferred to the Dominican one, for it had the lovely red-and-white stripes of the awning at the ice-cream parlor. We sang a song addressing Osaycanyousee, but since I didn't understand English very well and was merely parroting my classmates, I didn't know exactly what we were asking him for. (I assumed that, as in a hymn, there was a request attached to the song.) We also sang the marine song, "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli," marching in place to the rallying

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beat. The marines had occupied the country often, most recently when they had installed Trujillo as head of state two and a half decades before, and their song as well as the light-skinned, light-eyed children with American names in the barrios were some of the traces that they had been there.

I would have picked up English easily even if I hadn't been sent to Carol Morgan's. Not only were there plenty of incentives to learn the language of cornflakes and Cracker Jacks and snow and Thumbelina, but I wanted to know what the grown-ups were saying. My mother's family spoke English to each other whenever they did not want the servants or the children to understand what they were saying. In Spanish, everything said was censored for our young ears, but English was the language of juicy gossip and forbidden information.

After a year at Carol Morgan School, my sisters and I began to crack the code. What we picked up was some alarming news: my father seemed to be in serious trouble.

"If they come, you tell them you don't know anything about it," my father explained to my mother in English one night at the supper table when the children had been excused. I was at the door and overheard him, turned, and saw the same worried look on his face as he had when delivering bad news to a patient's family. His eye fell on me; her eye fell on me. They looked at each other.

"Little children have big ears," my mother said to my father, and then to me, still in English, she said, "What are you doing here?"

I knew she was testing me, and I asked her what it was she was saying to me. But the uneasy look on my face betrayed me.

A few nights later, delaying bedtime by going for a glass of water in the pantry, I discovered my parents, crouched before a window in the darkened living room.

"Are they still there?" my mother whispered to my father in English.

"Yes, two—no, looks like three of them in the car."

"Should we call Vic, you think?"

"Not unless they get out."

"What are you—" I began, but my mother's startled cry stopped me mid-sentence. She clutched her robe as if she were wounded, and when at last she had recovered herself enough to speak, she scolded me, "What are you doing out of bed?" I told her I was going for a glass of water. "At this hour of the night?"

I could just as well have asked her why she and my father were crouched under a window in a dark room at this hour of the night, but I knew there was no arguing by her tone of voice. Promptly, she tucked me in bed, offering no explanations. There was punishment in her voice when she said, "We might have to spend the day in bed tomorrow

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catching up on our sleep." Tomorrow being Saturday, the day of going for ice cream, I did not persist in asking her questions.

The Era of Prosperity, the Dominican World's Fair that ushered it in, the tax benefits to investors—all were efforts by the regime to court continued American support and also to raise the morale of the country. Opposition was growing to Trujillo's quarter-of-a-century dictatorship. There were two failed invasions. Through torture of those captured, the Secret Police (the SIM) uncovered a vast underground, stretching west to Venezuela, north to New York, and nearby to Cuba. Security tightened. The internal underground disbanded. What hope was there of a change of government when along with the SIM and the military and his private henchmen, the United States State Department also seemed to be in Trujillo's pocket?

Although my father's family had not supported the regime when it first came into power, he too joined Trujillo's party. He had to. Those who didn't join were not issued identification cards, and without a stamped ID, one couldn't travel, buy certain products like gasoline, or even practice medicine. Besides, my father had to watch his step: he had had a past. As a university student he had been found out as a member of the student underground and had been forced to flee to Canada. There he had lived in exile for nine years, meeting and marrying my mother—a hometown girl from the Dominican Republic—and settling in New York. But then, her powerful family obtained a pardon for my father, and my homesick mother persuaded him to return to the Dominican Republic. Soon after I was born, they went back, and, for ten years, my father practiced medicine, stayed out of trouble, and seemed a docile, politically changed man.

But after two invasions, my father came under heavy suspicion by the SIM. Many of his friends and one brother had been involved in the last attempt. Every night, a black Volkswagen crept up our private entrance to the compound and sat on the driveway until dawn. One night, my father received a call from a patient's wife, because her husband had a bad pain on his right side. "Take him to the hospital immediately," he told her. "I'll meet you there." But when he tried to leave, the Volkswagen started up, the headlights shone, the car eased off the shoulder and blocked the driveway. My father went back inside the house and tried to call the hospital. The line was dead. At dawn, after the Volkswagen descended the driveway, my father took off for the hospital against my mother's pleas. She was sure the whole emergency was a ruse to catch my father at something he wasn't supposed to be doing (removing a bullet from a rebel, breaking curfew). But the emergency proved to be true, and tragic: my father's patient died from a ruptured appendix.

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What kept my father from being rounded up with the others each time there was a purge—for people disappeared for less of an offense than acquaintance with troublemakers—was his connection with my mother's powerful family. It was not just their money that gave them power, for wealth was sometimes an incentive to persecute a family and appropriate its fortune. It was their strong ties with Americans and the United States. As I mentioned, most of my aunts and uncles had graduated from American schools and colleges, and they corresponded regularly with their classmates and alumni associations. Spring, summer, and Christmas vacations, the compound was crowded with old classmates and their new families. My aunts and uncles returned the visits when they traveled to the States. The family subscribed to American magazines, received mail-order catalogues, and joined American clubs and honorary societies. This obsession with American things was no longer merely enchantment with the States, but a strategy for survival. The one thing Trujillo still seemed to fear was losing American support of his regime. There was some safety in American connections. Even an American postmark was an indication to the post office censors that some American knew of your whereabouts.

In addition to American friends abroad, the family had American friends nearby. Next door to the compound, my grandfather rented several buildings to the American embassy. A cinder-block wall went up between us and them, but there was a gate at the bottom of the yard through which we could cross over for sanctuary should we need to. Occasionally at first, and then almost every day, Mister Victor would drop in from his offices next door for a visit.

This American consul was a tall, gawky, redheaded bachelor with so many freckles you lost count and with a repertoire of parlor tricks and a rhyming name (Miśter Vićtor) that made him popular with all the little cousins. He had been Uncle's classmate at Yale, and when he arrived on assignment in the Dominican Republic, our family took him in. The women fussed over him and set out on a campaign to fatten him up. They were also bent on matchmaking for him since they had decided that, as a bachelor, he must be "lonely, *el pobrecito.*" But Mister Victor stumped them on both counts. He ate quantities of their *arroz con pollo*, *tostónes*, *moro con guandules*, and *avichuelas con dulce* without seeming to gain a pound. He also seemed to prefer the company of us children to any of our young pretty aunts, pulling chocolates out of our backsides, making handkerchiefs disappear, and finding pennies behind our ears, which, having been minted inside us, we were allowed to keep. He was as good as family, and soon we began calling him "Tio Vic," our Uncle Vic.

Tio Vic was not the only American who was often over at the compound. My fourth year at Carol Morgan School, I made a best friend

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of the daughter of Mr. Buchanan, Elizabeth Buchanan, a girl my mother encouraged me to invite over ("such a nice girl"). Mrs. Buchanan was an avid canasta player, and often Elizabeth rode home with me in the limousine sent from the compound to pick the children up at school. At my house she met up with her mother, whom she called "Mom" and who called her all kinds of pet names, "Sweetheart" and "Cupcake" and "Angel." Her mother was intensely interested in everything Elizabeth had done that day in school, queried her on what she had eaten for lunch, and worried over every little scratch even if it wasn't bleeding anymore. My mother claimed that Elizabeth was so special because she was an only child, but I was sure it had more to do with her being an American girl, that special breed.

I was awed by the way they looked, the American girls at school, with their yellow hair, ponytails, blue eyes, pale skin. They seemed like sickly children at first—how long would they live? But once I saw that the children in my reader, the actresses in the movies, and the dolls Grandmother brought me from the States all looked like her, I too wanted to look like Elizabeth Buchanan.

"Isn't there any way," I interrogated my father, the doctor, "some operation that'll make my eyes turn blue?"

"Hmm?" My father was often preoccupied these days. "Ask your mother," he always advised. I did and got a lecture. There were plenty of poor little children who would give anything just to have plain, healthy bodies. . . . I should be grateful, and so on.

I asked Elizabeth. There were ways, she said. She had heard about these new glasses you could fit inside your eyes that changed their color, and as for hair, you could bleach that. That was settled, but first I wanted to make sure she could see with her blue ones as well as I could with my brown, practical pair. Blue eyes looked blind to me. "Elizabeth, see that guava up on that branch?" I pointed. "What of it?" Elizabeth stared at me. I was distracted by her stares. Little Dominican girls were taught never to look at anyone point-blank without also smiling.

"Let's try and knock it down, Elizabeth."

"I'm not allowed to eat those things," Elizabeth reported. "They make me sick to my stomach."

Now that was a side of American children I could not make sense of: they actually believed explanations given to them by their parents, and they parroted them as valid excuses not to do something interesting and exciting, even when their parents were not around to catch them. How could Elizabeth be so gullible as to believe she had been forbidden guavas for her own good when everyone knew a ripe, meaty guava was the best thing to eat if you weren't allowed sweets between meals? That's why the adults were always saving them to make guava paste or

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cut them up with a knife into bite-sized, democratic slices for everyone.

Elizabeth, Mr. Buchanan, the American embassy next door, Yale, Cornell, Brown, Andover, Eaglebrook, *House Beautiful* (the magazine did a piece on tropical paradises and photographed all the houses in the compound)—the family had a phalanx of Americans protecting them. Mister Victor, in particular, seemed to spend more and more time over at our house. Perhaps he felt responsible since it was because of him that my father had gotten involved in the underground again. Like many consuls in small, volatile Third World republics, Mister Victor was an undercover CIA agent, and from the beginning his assignment had included combing the professionals and members of prominent families to effect an overthrow of the government. Batista had been ousted in Cuba; Betancourt elected in Venezuela; South America was going the way of democracy, and the United States wanted to be on top of it.

Mister Victor had approached my father, whose past involvement in the underground he seemed to know all about. He offered guns and recognition of the new government should a coup be successful. My father was encouraged and, together with friends, reorganized the underground, much more cleverly this time, in "cells" of three. Should any one cellmate be arrested and tortured, he could only reveal the names of two other rebels. Eventually, of course, the SIM could keep capturing contacts and uncovering the whole underground. But such a process took time, time in which suspects could escape or go into hiding or accomplish a revolution.

Early one morning, we were sitting down to breakfast when Mister Victor was announced by the maid. He did not join us at the table as he usually did if he showed up at a mealtime. Instead, he took my father into the study, and when the two men emerged, their faces were grim. Mister Victor had brought bad news: father's two cellmates had been rounded up with others and taken to La Victoria, the worst of the torture prisons, from which very few prisoners came back alive or intact. It was a matter of time before they would start to talk. My father and his family—for we could be held hostage if we stayed behind—must leave the country as soon as possible. The question was how. Security was extremely tight, and it was nearly impossible to get a visa even when one wasn't under suspicion. The Americans could not come right out and help my father. Such premature support would alert the SIM and endanger the imminent coup. My father was on his own, but as a friend, Tio Vic wanted to help.

What the two men came up with was a ruse involving a fellowship for my father to intern in the United States as a Dominican member of an international heart surgery team. A letter arrived from the State Department extending the invitation; my father applied to the head of Immi-

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gration for permission to leave the country. Then, nothing was heard from the official for a week. Each day, my father did not know what would come first: his permission papers or the SIM.

What saved his life—by now so charmed it seems an invented story—was an unbelievable coincidence: a namesake. The island is small; there are relatively few surnames, Alvarez being one of the most common, like Jones or Smith in the United States. In the underground, there were several Alvarezes and one other Dr. Alvarez who had recently fled the country, having been tipped off about the imminent arrests. Under torture, my father's cellmates talked, but they gave their contact as the Dr. Alvarez who had fled to Venezuela.

This coincidence gained my father time, but it was the American consul's friendship that kept him safe. Mister Victor had become a constant presence in our house: he ate there, stayed late, sometimes slept over. Daily, he called friends at Immigration, wondering over the progress of my father's papers. In anticipation of our leaving, he gave my father a going-away barbecue and cleverly invited the head of Immigration to the party. Wasn't it a commitment of sorts to letting my father go for the official to attend and join in the toasts congratulating my father on his fellowship?

But day after dull day went by and still no word from Immigration. Summer was nearly over; soon school would start up again. Beyond the walls of the compound, the political situation grew even more tense. In his last years, Trujillo had become increasingly irrational, brutal, and paranoiac, striking out at any offender, near and far. In Venezuela, he tried to have President Betancourt assassinated for giving asylum to Dominican exiles, but the bomb went off too early, and Betancourt was only wounded. In New York, a Columbia University graduate student named Galindez was kidnapped and murdered after refusing to sell his thesis—an exposé of the regime—to SIM agents, who purportedly offered $25,000 for it. The young American who had flown this mission for the SIM (landing the helicopter on top of Galindez's apartment building and then heading out to sea) also disappeared. The Organization of American States brought sanctions against the Dominican Republic. The United States recalled its ambassador, and Mister Victor and a handful of attachés and agents were left in charge of the consulate next door.

Late one summer night, Wimpy's store was bombed: his scripted name, the cereal boxes, the Dutch Goudas, English biscuits, and Swiss chocolates were blown to glassy bits. A civics teacher at the Carol Morgan School was threatened with the kidnapping of his wife and young child for not keeping to the party-line interpretation of Dominican history. Americans began to fear becoming the target of Trujillo's ire. The Buchanan Ford Motors closed up, and Mr. and Mrs. Buchanan and

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Elizabeth departed. Grass grew between the cracks of the pavement at the Olympic. The Americans were leaving, and we wanted to join the exodus north.

"Are we leaving today?" I kept asking my mother every day.

"Our papers haven't come."

"What papers?"

"Permission papers," Mother explained. My older sister and I, being Americans, could leave right that moment if we wanted to, but she and my father and baby sisters had to wait for their papers. I felt a loss of my parents' absolute power. Here they needed to ask permission like children to get into a country where my sister and I had right of way!

Finally, one August morning, Tio Vic returned from Immigration with a packet of our papers and passports. My father booked us on the first flight out that very night to New York City. There was not that much sorting and packing to do: our suitcases had been ready for so long that the clothes had worn creases at their folds. Throughout the day, cousins and aunts and uncles came over to say good-bye; everyone was far too helpful. That skirt needed ironing. A button was discovered to be missing from a blouse that was going, for suddenly everything was divided into what was going and what was not going. Two needles were threaded, and buttons found to be loose were reinforced. Didn't the children need practice in their English? "Children, how do you say *suitcase* in English? How do you say *dress*?" We translated the contents of our bags into our new tongue as we packed them for the last time.

Surreptitiously, at different times that afternoon and evening, the young maids took us children aside and thrust small photos of themselves in our hands, their names and addresses printed on the back by whichever one of them could write—just in case we came across a nice American man who wanted to marry a nice Dominican girl. I put the snapshots away in my bag and promised to do what I could for them.

After a late supper, already past our bedtime, Tio Vic came for us in a limousine driven by a marine. Down the driveway we went—there was no black Volkswagen to block our way tonight. We crossed the old city, then followed the coastline to the airport beyond the bay. There we waited. The plane was late. My parents and Tio Vic spoke in low, worried voices, but we children barely noticed the delay. We had fallen asleep on the lounge benches, and I, for one, did not fully awake until dawn the next morning inside the airplane.

The whole sequence of our actual leaving seems, therefore, like a dream. There was a storm coming in, creating thunder and lightning and worry about whether the plane would make it at all. Then, one of the thunderclaps seemed to disengage itself, draw closer, rumbling louder, before finally roaring, wheezing, and whining to a stop right outside the

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terminal. We children were shaken awake. Half-asleep, we stumbled down a long runway. Airport searchlights scanned the dark and rainy August sky. Mist was blowing in from the sea through the palm trees as in a scary movie. Mother led the way in front, we girls were in the middle, then Father was at the rear with Tio Vic, trailing good-byes. I remember a square of bright yellow light at the top of a staircase, and framed there was our stewardess, a grown-up Elizabeth Buchanan with a dazzling, wake-up smile.

When I did wake up, morning sunlight flooded the cabin. The buzzing sound of the engines confused me, and for a moment I thought I might be back in my own bed at home with the air conditioner going. But there wasn't much time to feel lost. Passengers were talking in excited voices in English and in Spanish all up and down the aisle. My parents were shaking us to wake up and see the vision below us.

I turned to look—my breath stopped. Below us was a city that seemed imagined, not built, a magical city of tiny towers whose windows flashed in the early morning sun. There were cavernous avenues, with rivers of minuscule cars and teensy people. We were coming in for a landing, the pilot announced. The cabin went absolutely still. My mother made the sign of the cross, closed her eyes, and gripped the armrests. The pretty hostess came smiling down the aisle and asked politely if I wouldn't mind buckling my seat belt.

Down, down we swooped. There was a bump and a skip, as if the plane, like a toy bank, were being worked by a coin. And then some of the passengers in the cabin broke into spontaneous applause. A few Dominicans wept quietly.

"*Llegamos*!" my father said a little sadly.

"We're here!" I echoed my father in English. Despite my dark hair and coloring, despite the fact that I came from generations of Dominicans, I joined the Americans in clapping. All my childhood I had dressed like an American, eaten American foods, and befriended American children. I had gone to an American school and spent most of the day speaking and reading English. At night, my prayers were full of blond hair and blue eyes and snow and just such a plane ride as this one. All my childhood I had longed for this moment of arrival. And here I was, an American girl, coming home at last.

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Obit for Sally E.

M. E. Morrow

> *Investigating officers found that the pack of dogs had escaped from a fenced-in area surrounding a small house in the woods. . . .*
> —from an evening paper

"Only a small skull and a few long bones
Were found"—the evening paper said,
But there wasn't the slightest mention made
That Sally Eppingworth was dead.
Most of us had seen her—maybe once or twice—
Poking sticks at things along the road
Or pawing through some pile of trash
For anything to feed the pack of dogs
That she had gathered round her place
To ward off evil—make it safe.

And as I read the news my mind flipped back
To a story we once read in German class
About how Death can build a door.
I don't remember much—*Tod* and *Tür* come through—
But it seems there was a couple who
Boarded up their home with such great care
They thought that Death could never, ever enter there.

But Death was boarded in not out
Just as it was for poor old Sally
Who must have fallen with a stroke
In the safety of her yard—among her friends
Who couldn't watch her suffer there upon the ground
And saved her from the thing we all most fear:

Lying helpless, useless and so very much alone
In some God-forsaken place they call a nursing home.

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Art at the End of Empire

ERICH HELLER

A student of modern German, upon becoming acquainted with the works of the mind produced in German during the first decades of our century, is bound to be struck by the disproportionately large contribution made by the German-speaking territories of Austria, or what was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until its defeat and downfall at the end of the First World War. It would be tedious to support this by a list of names. It is enough to mention Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg, Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Adolf Loos, and Franz Kafka. All of these, except Loos, were Jews, but for the moment let this pass.

The collapse of the Austrian Empire, equal in its traumatic effects to the severest ruptures in the history of European civilizations, such as the end of Rome, or the Thirty Years' War, or the French Revolution, or the refutation, in astronomy, of the geocentric system, was certainly not a sudden catastrophe. During the long period that preceded and prepared it, the political vexations and tribulations of the Hapsburg Monarchy had steadily increased. This gradual falling apart showed even more conspicuously in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual upheavals of a region that proved its integral importance for Europe most clearly when its coherence slowly disintegrated. The air filled with evil omens that disturbingly accompanied radical ventures of new beginnings, enterprises inspired by great hope and great desperation, the kind of desperation that is deep enough to come upon the purest waters of the spirit—for instance, in the newly recovered simplicity of forms or, in some cases, the inviolable order of language. Yet it is more likely that even these new beginnings were the concentrates of desperation, or, as Franz Kafka put it in one of his most puzzling paradoxes: "There is an abundance of hope, but not for us."

Although some of Franz Kafka's writings—*The Castle*, for instance—have been interpreted as a satire of the labyrinthine Austrian bureaucracy, he, in fact, never questioned the right of the Hapsburg Monarchy to exist or to defend its existence. He even sounded, in some of the remarks he made in letters or diaries, not like his near-contemporary, the Jewish writer Joseph Roth, who became a devout Roman Catholic and Hapsburg monarchist, but like a matter-of-fact patriotic subject of His Apostolic Majesty, even to the point of envying the healthy conscripts and volunteers of 1914 their martial employment. I even suspect that the very short story he wrote in the spring of 1917 after the manner of "an old leaf" (this is its title) torn from a forgotten chronicle is the parabolic expression of an anxiety much more directly "political" than any other of Kafka's stories. It tells of a disaster that overtook an imaginary monarchy. Its first sentence is: "Much must have been neglected in the defence of our fatherland." It is as brief as many another first sentence of this author and is in all its brevity charged with a heavy burden of apprehension.

The fictitious writer of this story is a cobbler whose workshop happens to be on the square in front of the imperial palace. One morning he sees the place filled with barbarous soldiers who, unobserved and unopposed, must have invaded the city during the night. The barbarity of their customs is described with the same sadistic abandon that we know from other, even more elaborately cruel, phantasmagorias of Kafka's, imagined atrocities that

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before long became real in such localities as Buchenwald and Auschwitz. Yet there is also a joke in the story, a macabre joke. It occurs when the cobbler mentions the barbarians' illiteracy. They don't know "our language" and possess hardly one of their own but communicate among themselves "not unlike jackdaws." This bird, the jackdaw, is called *Dohle* in German and "*kavka*" in Czech. Surely, Kafka used his own name here, and elsewhere, not inadvertently. It joins the company of the many expressions of his self-doubts; and the most tormenting of them was the suspicion that he, unquestionably called to be a writer, had not succeeded in fashioning the language that would do justice to his inner vision or indeed to the reality of the world.

Obviously meant for communication, language in the late Austro-Hungarian Empire had turned into the most amply flowing source of misunderstanding, the sort of fatal misunderstanding that the cobbler-author of the "old leaf" names at the end of the fragmentary chronicle: "He who may have believed that we artisans and business people" could live up to the task that apparently had been entrusted to us—namely, to "save the fatherland"—was fatally mistaken. It was, we read, "a misunderstanding of which we shall perish." Clearly, this misunderstanding is of the same lethal kind as the one that concludes Kafka's story "A Country Doctor," probably also written in that losing year, 1917: "A false alarm on the night bell once answered—it cannot be made good, not ever."

Yet there is no need for military negligence or night bells to create such misunderstandings. Language in itself suffices. This, the untrustworthiness of language, is an obsession of Austrian literature and thought during the decline of the Hapsburg Monarchy. Of course, the *Problematik* of language is not confined to the region of the Hapsburg Monarchy. We need only think of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which in some passages sound like poetry made from the experience that poetry has reached its end, for

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision. . . .

And, therefore, the poets only know how

> to get the better of words
> For the thing one no longer has to say or the way in which
> One is no longer disposed to say it. . . .

True, such doomsday skepticism concerning language has been familiar ever since Hamlet's "words, words, words." Yet these doubts are endemic in the literature and thought of Austria at the turn of the century and after. Karl Kraus, *the* Austrian satirist of that epoch (and one of the few writers of his time whose writings Kafka was eager to read) once said: "*In keiner Sprache kann man sich so schwer verständigen wie in der Sprache*" (There is no language in which it is as difficult to communicate as in language). It might have been said by Kafka and is written in the handwriting of Austria.

"Words don't say it," wrote Robert Musil, one of the most articulate writers in the country, when describing the confusions of an adolescent, the young Törless; and Hugo von Hofmannsthal introduced a fictitious young Elizabethan nobleman, Lord Chandos, a promising poet, as speaker of the unspeakable, and made him explain to his powerful patron, Francis Bacon, why he had to cease writing poetry: because there was, for him, no longer any felt correspondence between words and his inner experience. All words, therefore, had become mendacious. Chandos himself had lost the ability to think and speak about anything in those tidy sequences that are demanded by grammar and syntax. The link by which his inward state was chained to the system of outward signs was broken.

This is the exact formula of the incessant literary experiments made at that time. *The Death of Virgil* by the Austrian Hermann Broch is only one of them, his last sustained work of literature before his withdrawal from all art and artifact because, he believed, they no longer "mattered." Still, the acknowledged headmaster of those schools for linguistic scandal was, surprisingly, not an Austrian, but an Irishman: James Joyce. Yet the formula—the discontinuity, acutely felt, between the inward condition and the external order—is valid far beyond the sphere of literature. Ultimately it caused the breakdown, among many another collapse of political arrangements and psychological assumptions, of the Monarchy. Its political reality had ceased to

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be the "objective correlative" (to use T. S. Eliot's coinage) of the inner lives or intellectual perceptions of its citizens. In simpler language, more and more people ceased to believe in the Monarchy's justification.

The literary urge to be ever more original in the use of language—a tendency conservatively opposed by Karl Kraus and Franz Kafka—is one aspect of the insurrection against the tyrannical rule of words, grammar, and syntax that was experienced as illegitimate and deceitful in its insistence upon a hollowed-out tradition of thoughts and feelings. At no time had it been demonstrated as clearly as in this epoch that no truly radical breaking away from tradition was thinkable as long as people labored under the merciless rule of language. Dadaism, surrealism, futurism, concrete poetry, abstract expressionism, even *Finnegans Wake*—something a little ridiculous attaches to them all because they display through their final futility and failure the inevitable victory of the old and oldest: the traditional means of expression, with the authority of language foremost among them.

Yet the discomfort caused by the discrepancy between within and without persisted. Small wonder that it was an Austrian writer, once again Franz Kafka, who in his early story "Description of a Struggle" made someone ask for an explanation of this disturbance: "What really is the matter with these things that swirl around me and vanish like snowflakes[?] . . ." He promptly is told that he suffers from a kind of "seasickness on land," because "you have forgotten the true names of things and now hastily pour arbitrary names over them." Clearly, the "seasickness on land" is the sickness of language. And instantly Babel is alluded to: "The poplar tree in the field that you used to call the 'Throne of Babel' sways again namelessly."

The true name, shy like mountain goats and stalked by philosophers and poets throughout the ages, has become, amidst the swaying of all things, more elusive than ever. The true name, even if it exists, is bound to remain unrecognized and unrecognizable because it seems that there is no one left to utter it with authority; and it is the *ordeal of authority* that, in Western Europe, reaches its dramatic climax with the downfall of the Hapsburgs, the oldest dynastic family in the Western world. It is, of course, paralleled in Eastern Europe by the Russian Revolution and farther west by the growing instability of the British Empire with its old and westernmost problem, Ireland. This point is also appropos of James Joyce, quite apart from his abandoning authoritative Catholicism.

In the case of the Hapsburgs and the Romanovs, the consequence of their demise was not freedom but the worst form of despotism, Stalin's and Hitler's. Hitler, preceded in his insane anti-Semitism by the cozier Austrian anti-Semites Schoenerer and Lueger, was the legitimate and accursed child of the Monarchy, stepping with hysterical self-assurance into a vacuum created by the collapse of authority. When Kafka, in that undelivered letter to his father, told him that he, the son, knew no higher authority than his father, no God or emperor, the author of "The Judgment," of *The Trial*, or *The Castle*, unwittingly revealed the destiny that awaited him: to become the representative writer of Austro-Hungary, or, rather, of a world where nobody truly possessed the authority to authorize that state to exist. Its family doctor was Sigmund Freud.

It was a luminous and yet dark night in September 1912 during which Kafka wrote "The Judgment" in a condition of uninterrupted inspiration that lasted from ten o'clock in the evening until six o'clock in the morning. During those hours he produced the first and possibly the only piece of sustained writing with which he was completely satisfied. "The Judgment" is an Austrian story, the story of the perversely displaced *ultimate* authority. It is about a son whose father, apparently a quite ordinary father, enfeebled by old age, wearing a dressing gown over not-too-clean underwear, sentences him to death by drowning, and does so for no clearly punishable offense. And the son, unresistingly, accepts the judgment of the ultimate authority. He rushes out of the house and throws himself into the nearby river. In the early morning, after having written "The Judgment," Kafka, lying awake in bed, thinks—as he reports in his diary—of a number of people in connection with the nocturnal creation. Freud, of course, is among them; Freud, the inventor of the Oedipus complex. How not? "The Judgment" would seem to be a striking confirmation of the psychoanalytical diagnosis. And so it is, although Kafka elsewhere had only negative things to say about psychoanalysis.

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The Oedipus complex is not what Freud himself believed it was: the *universal* pathology besetting the lives of fathers and sons. If it were, the classical works of our tradition would surely bear testimony to it and more frequently and more unambiguously than does the story of Noah and whatever it was that one of his sons did to him when he found the old man lying drunk and naked in his tent.

No, the Oedipus complex is not a general disposition of the young male psyche. It is one of the gifts of Hapsburg, among other decrepit authorities, to generations of sons who had, with the vanishing of any higher commands, unknowingly appointed their fathers to the position of "ultimate" authority, and disliked them not only because rebellion against *any* authority was characteristic of the epoch, but also because of the fathers' unavoidable failure to live up to the unnatural task; and this applied above all to Jewish fathers who, like Kafka's, came from a strictly paternalistic family tradition.

Freud's mistake lay in his determination to be "scientific." Many other speculative and imaginative minds of his time also hankered after scientific certitudes where no scientific certitudes were available, and without pausing to reflect that even where scientific certitudes seemed most securely established—for instance, in Newtonian physics—after Einstein they ceased to be quite as certain as once they had been. Yet Freud was bent on discovering *universal* laws ruling the movements of the psyche after the example of Newton's discoveries concerning the movements of the planets. His vision was fixed on "science," and the more stubbornly so, the more blatantly unpredictable and insecure the destiny of man had become in a world falling apart, spiritually and temporally, intellectually and politically. Otherwise he would have been struck by the powerful *historical* emergence of *his* Oedipus in the literature of the nineteenth century. Never before had there been such a plenitude of hated fathers and hating sons as in the novels of Stendhal or Turgenev or Dostoyevsky. Yet it ought to be noted in passing that, even in the terrifyingly "Oedipal" *Brothers Karamazov*, one of the sons, the "idiot" Alyosha, is unoppressed by any resentment of the abominable father—and not much of a "complex" would be required to hate what is hateful. Alyosha had elected as *his* father Father Zosima after the image of Jesus and his Father in Heaven. But then, Alyosha had a soul, not a psyche, and the age of Sigmund Freud was not a Christian era.

What Freud analyzed was the psyche shaped by a certain historical epoch—*not*, as he was prone to believe, *the* human psyche. If exaggerations were more easily forgiven, it might be said that it was the psyche of the declining Hapsburg Monarchy. Of course, Freud's doctrine spread. For with its empire dissolving, the Monarchy expanded its psyche far beyond its ever more insecure frontiers. The distinguishing feature of this psyche was that, together with the untenable assignment of authority, it was also denied its benefits—for instance, the clear theological or legal definition of guilt. Yet the sense of guilt persisted. "Guilt is never to be doubted," says the officer in Kafka's horror story "The Penal Colony"—the officer who is, like the father in "The Judgment," prosecutor *and* judge in one person, and sentences a soldier to death by a contraption put together in accordance with a technically and sadistically most ingenious design. If the victim is not entirely innocent, his offense is almost trivial when set up against the monstrosity of the punishment. It is a nameless and diffused guilt that is at the center of Kafka's imagination, as it is in Freud's analytical mind, despite his strenuous and often labored attempts to find the causes of the neurotic anxiety and thus to give it, as it were, a habitation and a name.

"Never again psychology!" Kafka once exclaimed in his diary, and called psychoanalysis an "impotent error." He looked upon "all those so-called illnesses" diagnosed by Freud as substitute beliefs, "the distressed human being's anchorages in some maternal ground." Therefore, he was not surprised "that psychoanalysis finds the primal ground of all religions to be precisely the same thing as what causes the individual 'illnesses.' " In Kafka's story "A Country Doctor" there is a passage that makes the point with admirable conciseness. The doctor had just found the lethal wound of his young patient (it seemed to be in the very anatomical place where the Lord, to most portentous ends, once removed a rib from Adam). The poor boy was past helping but the family, seeing the doctor busying himself, was pleased. And then we read:

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This is what people are like in my district. Always expecting the impossible from the doctor. They have lost their ancient beliefs, the parson sits at home and unravels his vestments, one after another, but the doctor is supposed to be omnipotent. . . . Well, as it pleases them, I have not thrust my services on them. If they misuse me for sacred ends, I let that happen.

The confusion of roles or the displacement of functions is one of the gravest symptoms of a society in which the center no longer holds and authority is distributed at random: country doctors are omnipotent, fathers are felt to be absolute authorities, and journals are looked upon as sources of truth. Shakespeare, forever fascinated by the question of legitimate or illegitimate power and authority, forever warned that chaos must ensue upon the taking away of "decree," upon the "untuning" of that string that sounds the ground bass of hierarchical order: "and hark what discord follows." And Shakespeare lived in an epoch in which the authority of the Christian Church was shaken.

The struggle against these discords, these distortions of true order, to forbid the country doctor to assume the role of the churchman: these are the major themes of the moralists in this Austrian chapter of intellectual history. Karl Kraus, the inspired and incensed satirist, fought the false pretense of writers, writing feuilletons for the journals and covering up the grievous loss of substance with the decorative metaphors of their journalistic agility. He had no difficulty in showing that the corruption of language mirrored, or produced, or furthered the corruption of minds and souls—it is a tangle of cause and effect that nobody can cut through. Reporters of the First World War, using the deceitful patriotic clichés, speaking of swords and shields where it was a matter of poison gas and machine guns (and soon would be the business of atom bombs) paralyzed the moral nerve of men who might have forestalled the coming of "the last days of mankind." This is the name of Karl Kraus's drama of the First World War. Note the apocalyptic resonance of this title, or the exceeding moralism contained in a title like "Ornament and Crime." It is the title of an essay published in 1908 by the architect Adolf Loos, who denounced as fraudulent the kind of richly ornamental building that was typical of the *Gründer-Jahre*, the nouveau riche Vienna.

Adolf Loos maintained that his time was ethically and, therefore, aesthetically constrained to express in its architecture what it did possess: technical competence, the ability to construct machines that performed superbly. What truthfully corresponded to it in architecture was what is known under the name of Functionalism. Its aesthetic purity of outline, supported by the exquisite craftsmanship of door handles and window frames, would transport it into the sphere of art. But, alas, in the course of time this ideal has been cheapened by routine, so much so that it has affected one's appreciation even of the exemplary originals. Loos's contemporary, the Austrian poet Georg Trakl—a remarkable apocalyptic poet if ever there was one—grew ecstatic at the sight of the architect's famous building on the Michaelerplatz in Vienna, calling it "the countenance of pure spirit, the silent stone sublimely formed." In more recent days no such ecstasies have been reported from the Michaelerplatz. The last great praise for Loos, in great prose, was the funeral oration by Karl Kraus. Yet Loos was one of the preeminent makers of a style that in the world at large is now associated with better-known names—for instance, Le Corbusier, or Frank Lloyd Wright, or Mies van der Rohe. And if architecture is petrified music, as Schiller said, the music is probably by Webern.

The affinity between Loos's moral negation of the ornament and the moral claims that Schönberg made for the new music, for his "Method," needs no stressing. With regard to the Austrian history of music, it is as if Gustav Mahler had spent all the handed-down resources of music, a prodigal son of tradition or an inspired but overgenerous heir to a fortune that was about to be exhausted. "Den Erben lass verschwenden . . ." is the first line of a poem by Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Let the heir squander his inheritance. Now, Mahler certainly did not waste his. He even enriched it by many innovations. Still, he brought it to an end with energetic melancholy.

What now? This was the question asked by all the arts, and T. S. Eliot's "For us there is only the trying" was the answer given by the grand and restless experimenters of the time, above all by Stravinsky and Picasso. In the Hapsburg Monarchy, the country singularly advanced in decline, some responded with a

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moral radicalism that would have been wholly admirable, had it not been suffused with despair. Against the pretentious ornaments of spiritual emptiness they set the courage of their truths, which, in the circumstances, meant slimming, slimming, slimming. Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt, solid, or sullied and corrupt. Slimming—it may have ended with the skeleton, the medieval image of death. "Acheronta movebo" (I shall move up the underworld) was, not unsuitably, Freud's motto. Although he was certainly not the first who knew that behind the decorous curtains of respectability there lurked the disreputable, if not the infernal, he was the first to use this knowledge medically and methodically. The unacknowledged enmity between civilized conduct and uncivilized desire caused, according to him, the derailments of the neurotic psyche. Yet there is good reason to believe that this devoted therapist in the end came to see that the neurotic patient was Austria; and not only Austria, but mankind; and was incurable.

The uninhibited Austrian painter of desire was Egon Schiele, in succession to the art nouveau master Gustav Klimt. Some of Schiele's works would be catalogued as pornography were it not for the highly sophisticated virtuosity that has gone into their making and the intensity of the passion informing them. On rare occasions this may even be said of the Austrian artist who later enjoyed greater success in the world: Oskar Kokoschka. He also, unsuccessfully, wrote plays. One of them is called *Murder—Hope of Women.* The very title suggests Lulu's "hope" and Lulu herself, the "heroine" of Wedekind's drama of a sham civilization, collapsing as soon as it is confronted with the amoral, unreflecting, unbridled *Erdgeist*, the spirit of earth and nature, Wedekind's *Erdgeist*, not Goethe's and, therefore, almost entirely the incarnation of the Freudian id, above all the power of sex: Lulu—a name of two syllables like Zola's Nana, an epithet of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, a relation of Venus. Wedekind ought to have been Viennese. He was not. Munich was his city, as it was the city of Richard Strauss; and Strauss was the composer of the kindred operas *Salome* and *Elektra*. But the composer of *Lulu* was indeed Viennese, Alban Berg, the most powerful (and most eclectic) among the practitioners of the new music.

Hope and murder, despair and a new beginning—what extremes! And extreme opposites came together in the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the most influential philosopher from Vienna. He was also most radical in his philosophical asceticism. While Wittgenstein's architectural principles were like those of Loos—Wittgenstein built a house in Vienna that, in design and execution, is practically indistinguishable from the work of Loos—in his thinking he went even further, certainly further than the philosopher of language that preceded him, the Jewish Austrian Fritz Mauthner; and Wittgenstein certainly went further than "Slimming!" The order of his first philosophy is all but Hamlet's "Refrain!" He once said: "The philosopher treats a question like an illness." The therapy that is alluded to consists ultimately in refraining from philosophizing. For he did indeed say—and often implied—that the disease was philosophy itself. Of course, in the book upon which Wittgenstein's reputation was primarily founded, *Tractatus Logico—Philosophicus* of 1921, he only maintained that philosophically we have to be silent about what cannot be said. This seems simple enough, simple and self-evident—in fact, a logical tautology. Not quite, even though hardly anyone noticed what a deeply disquieting manifesto the *Tractatus* was, surely not Bertrand Russell, who welcomed the message from Vienna as if it merely perfected his own logical endeavors, and invited the messenger to Cambridge. But Wittgenstein had done uncomfortably more than Russell noticed.

Unexpectedly and paradoxically, Wittgenstein had placed his most rigorous and most refined logical system on pre-Kantian metaphysical foundations by claiming that within its exceedingly strict logical and linguistic limitations it *mirrored the true nature of the world.* But this, for him, was the terminus of philosophical speculation. Yet many who listened to him did not pay much attention to the word *philosophical* and behaved as if Wittgenstein's system had announced the end of *all* "meaningful" discourse outside the system's terms, and this despite his saying that "the sayable" did not say very much. For outside that strip of secure meaning stretched the immensity of the unsayable, the vast domain of silence. He called it the mystical; and the mystical could not be said; it *showed.*

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The mystics of the Christian Middle Ages and above all those of the German seventeenth century would have vehemently objected to this extraordinary extension of the mystical sphere; and it would not be surprising if it was the unusual employment of the word *mystical* that helped to bring about Wittgenstein's drastic retreat from the *Tractatus* philosophy, a taking-back very much more radical than some of his disciples were willing to admit. Yet in blatant violation of his previous severe doctrine, the later *Philosophical Investigations* postulated that the basic question to be asked about language was: Is a word "ever actually used in this way in the language in which it has its home?"; and when it was, it possessed validity as part of a way of life that was not to be subjected to logical inspection. The mystics, of course, never used "the mystical" in the wide sense in which Wittgenstein used it in the *Tractatus*. For them, the mystical began where the human mind opened itself to the influx of the divine spirit, thus passing beyond the ordinarily observed frontiers of the human estate and entering the sanctuary of God. Yet for the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, mystical silence was ordained long before the onset of such transports. "Unsayable" was now everything that touched upon aesthetic experience, or upon the ethical, or upon love, or upon death, or indeed upon the foredoomed meaning of life. All such questions had to be left without articulate answers because all articulate answers were polluted by the corruption of language and thought, the garrulous chorus that accompanied or indeed was the expression of the unholy decline and the loosening of all ethical disciplines.

Wittgenstein's tightening of the net of language and his extraordinary expansion of the areas where the unsayable was domiciled amounted to the strangest kind of asceticism: the apparent duty to abstain from the linguistic expressions of concerns that, at the same time, were held to be much more important than that which was permitted to be said. Like all asceticism it found its justification in ethics. In a letter, Wittgenstein once said of the *Tractatus* that its true significance was ethical; and, indeed, the order to remain silent about so much that, according to his rigorous definition, cannot be said not only has the ring of an ethical commandment, it *is* one; and it is in its own domain as radical as Schönberg's "Method" or Adolf Loos's interdiction of ornament, or as the sexual "Abstain!" that, in a time of erotic license, is the unheard-of and unheard message of the book *Sex and Character* by another Viennese Jew, Otto Weininger. Wittgenstein admired Weininger for his uncompromising ethical stance. Weininger was scarcely more than twenty when he produced that erudite work. He develops in mundane terms a kind of supra-Pauline radical asceticism with a monomaniac's dedication and a scholar's equipment. Not so long after the book's appearance, Weininger shot himself in the room in which Beethoven had died.

We have beheld these radicalisms and asceticisms of minds that came to the fore in these "last days of mankind"—that is, the last days of the Hapsburg Monarchy—and neglected entirely the *Heurigen-Stimmung* and *Merry Widow* merriments of its "Blue-Danube" capital, even the social and erotic melancholia of Schnitzler's elegant plays and stories. But there can be little doubt that those insurgents of the spirit, geniuses of a hope that is hopelessly entangled with despair, many of them prophets of a new beginning that is inseparable from the sense of doom are—artistically, intellectually, spiritually—the most forceful and captivating figures of the epoch.

Long before their time when another state, a holy one, went the way towards its dissolution, a group of Jews gathered around their chosen Messiah. They were driven by great inner energies and were desperate in their belief that the destruction of the temple, prophesied during the Roman rule of Vespasian—by, for instance, the "Epistle of Barnabas"—would mean the end of the world. Sensing the corrupt course of all worldly things, they followed Jesus, whose kingdom was not of this world. Many of the Hapsburg Jews, too, were possessed by the desire for salvation, and some of them even devised secular ways to achieve something that looked like it: a perfect language in speech and music, perfect psychic health, or perfectly dependable manners of thought. But in the depth of their sensibility, what they felt was the approach of a Day of Judgment. Although several of them had names that became famous, not one name was hallowed. For there was no judge and hence no possibility of an ultimate reconciliation, let alone redemption.

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From Nostalgia to Utopia

HANS E. TÜTSCH

Europe has lost its center. It is now divided into West and East. Central Europe has not even remained a geographical notion, as was Italy in Metternich's time. Many Europeans will not accept the demise of what was once Mitteleuropa. They try to reconstruct it, if not in reality at least in imagination. A multi-voiced chorus is to be heard from Trieste to Warsaw expressing the desire for a quiet zone located between the superpowers. But the borders and the content of this zone are not well defined.

What is Mitteleuropa? Asking proponents of a new Mitteleuropa or reading their essays, one finds that it is more or less identical with the Hapsburg Empire in its final phase. Hardly anybody speaks of Switzerland as part of Mitteleuropa, although its central location in Europe cannot be overlooked. Between the two world wars of the twentieth century, a rich literature bewailed the disappearance of Mitteleuropa. Nostalgia spread in the lands that once were ruled by the Hapsburgs and now are ironically described as Kakania (*Kakanien*, from *k und k*, or *kaiserlich* and *königlich*), ruled for ages by a benevolent Franz Joseph, Kaiser (Emperor) of Austria and König (King) of Hungary. The nostalgia lasted until Austria was absorbed by Hitler's Reich. Even before, a reconstruction of the Hapsburg dominion was unrealistic. The will to self-determination of the different nations that once belonged to Kakania had operated in 1918 as an irresistible explosive. Nor was much love lost between the successor states of the Hapsburg Empire.

But a residual feeling of having once belonged to one another nonetheless remains and is reinforced in times of crises or external threats. No two writers endow this vague sentiment with the same shape and form. Claudio Magris in Trieste, living in a free country, traces the red thread of common attitudes through the literature of the late Empire, and he asks the pertinent question from where his world is distant. Milovan Djilas, whose origins are not to be found in the former Hapsburg Empire, desires for his Yugoslavia a free sphere outside of the big power blocs. György Konrád in Budapest and Milan Kundera, formerly in Prague and for the last ten years an emigrant in Paris, desperately cry for help for their countries, by which they mean freedom from foreign occupation. Peter Hanák explains the different historical events that separated Mitteleuropa from Eastern Europe.

One of my first lessons in Central European history I received before entering grade school. Traveling from Bern to Zurich or vice versa, my father used to point out high above the railway and the road an ancient castle with a huge Swiss flag flying from its tower, and he explained patiently that this was the Hapsburg, once the seat of the mighty rulers who carried the name of this feudal fortress into history. Having to view at least once a year an open-air representation of Friedrich Schiller's *William Tell*, I knew that the Hapsburgs had been for centuries the archenemies of my Swiss ancestors. The red flag with the white cross on top of the Hapsburg castle was proof of a well-merited fate: defeat in war and the transformation of the ancestral seat into a typical Swiss institution, a restaurant.

It is a long way from the Hapsburg in Switzerland to the Hofburg of the emperors in Vienna. The Hofburg has remained the center of the Austrian administration. But only a relatively small part of the palace is reserved for the government. The rest has been transformed into various museums. The rooms where Franz Joseph led a rather bourgeois

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existence during his long reign are today invaded by masses of tourists. The emperor apparently had not felt a desire for a bathroom of his own. Our guide has found an original name for the furniture of the second half of the nineteenth century: second Baroque. Karl Kraus lamented, "Vienna is demolished into a big city" (Wien wird zur Grosstadt demoliert). Names like Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg, and many others speak of its exceptional vitality. During the same period that the Hapsburg Empire fell, anti-Semitism grew, Zionism emerged, social democracy first rose and then was temporarily destroyed, corporatism was attempted, the stock exchange crashed, and finally Hitler returned to his native country.

The Austrians live today in less interesting times, but probably they are enjoying them more. Austrian diplomacy tries to relieve the country of its peripheral position as an outpost of the free world. It invites international organizations and is proud of having a huge building occupied by the United Nations. Austria strives to maintain cordial relations with its neighbors. Its citizens are admitted into Hungary without visas. But with Czechoslovakia, continuous frictions disrupt the policy of good neighborly relations. No longer is Vienna the second most populous Czech city after Prague and the second biggest Magyar settlement after Budapest, as it was in the days of the Empire.

The Austrian desire to acquire a middle position in Europe goes back to the Hapsburgs. Austria, however, often had to act as the fortress of the West against Eastern powers. On the Kahlenberg one not only enjoys a splendid view of the whole city of Vienna, but one is also reminded that here the forces were assembled that liberated Vienna from the siege by the Turks in 1683. *Oesterreich* means the Eastern Empire, and not long ago it was again given its original name, that of *Ostmark,* the Eastern March, by Adolf Hitler.

A middle position in Europe has to be acquired; it is not created by the geographic situation alone. Hardened lines of separation work against it, so a certain fluidity is striven for on different levels. Austria and Yugoslavia and Italy have achieved an economic and cultural collaboration on a regional basis between the self-governing Länder or regions like Carinthia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The central government can, however, interrupt these contacts at any time. The Brezhnev Doctrine that proclaims the irreversibility of the so-called socialist regimes is certainly not conducive to a loosening of the fetters that hold down some of the nations that see themselves not as East European but as Mitteleuropa.

On the Western side the would-be members of a new Mitteleuropa have to answer the question what, and how much, freedom and democracy would they renounce to achieve closer relations with socialist countries. Would a Finlandization be worth the stake? It is doubtful that a loosening of the Soviet grip—for which in any case there are no signs—would lead to an outbreak of friendship between the nations whose national aspirations and resentments have been suppressed for several decades.

Erhard Busek, a prominent politician of the Austrian People's Party, complains that no conceptual framework for a Mitteleuropa political movement exists. He pleads for the construction of a network of political contacts between the countries of Mitteleuropa that he would call a texture of peace. He has no illusions that domination by the great powers would soon disappear. "Where once was the center there is now a borderland," Busek writes in Paul Lendvai's *Europäische Rundschau.* The dream of Mitteleuropa persists, however. "The community of the nations is not a concept of the dusty drawer of the Hapsburg myth." Busek would proceed with small steps to establish little points of contact. He puts into bold relief the limits of the dream as viewed from Vienna.

A leisurely voyage down the Danube from Vienna to Budapest on a Soviet hydrofoil with a Hungarian crew leaves time for some observations and reflections. No stop is made at Bratislava. The guides point out how small the city has remained where once the kings of Hungary were crowned. Later comparisons between smaller towns on the right and left banks of the river come to the same result: the Hungarian place is always bigger and better. Not once do the Hungarians use the words *Slovakia* or *Slovaks.* The people on the left bank are called "Czechs." Less than seventy years have passed since today's Slovakia was "Upper Hungary."

The city of Esztergom passes by. Cardinal

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Mindszenty had received me twice in the palace of the Primates of Hungary. Looking over the Danube to the Slovak side with its large Hungarian minority, he exclaimed, "One million men look up from there to us and wait to be liberated." On one of my first assignments as a foreign correspondent, I covered the 1947 elections in Hungary. August 31, election day, brought the non-Communist parties a second victory, as in 1945, notwithstanding the pressures of the Soviet occupation power and the manipulations of the Communist party. Mátyás Rákosi already then conceded that members of the Communist party had cast "blue ballots" many times over. Andras Hegedüs, prime minister from April 1955 until October 23, 1956, has recently confessed in an autobiographical interview that he had cast twenty ballots in 1947. Three days after his resignation in 1956, Hegedüs was forced by party chief Ernö Gerö and Soviet ambassador Yuri Andropov to sign a paper asking for the intervention of Soviet troops against the freedom fighters in Budapest. Whatever the votes in 1945 and 1947, and notwithstanding the Revolution of 1956, the Soviets managed to impose their will.

I returned to Hungary the next year when the *Cominform* countries broke with Tito's Yugoslavia. I had covered the Putsch of Prague in February 1948. Then I wrote about the Danube Conference in Belgrade at which deputy foreign minister Andrei Vyshinsky, the former prosecutor in the Moscow show trials, looking gray and stale like a fish painted by Braque, cut down the Western influence on the Danube basin to nothing. The winter of 1948/49 I spent in Berlin during the Soviet blockade and the Western airlift. Then I returned again to Prague until, in 1949, the Communist authorities made work there impossible. The results of the elections in Czechoslovakia were less surprising than the time at which they became known: the distribution of the seats in the Czechoslovak Parliament was published in Zurich on May 7, while the elections took place on May 30, 1948! Recently when an American revisionist, who tried to convince me that the United States had started the Cold War, heard about my experiences, he responded sadly, "You are a hopeless case!"

My trip to Budapest and Prague had been planned for a long time and many times postponed. It acquired an unexpected political dimension when I realized the extent to which the idea of Mitteleuropa had been revived. I found the first hint in Norman Podhoretz's "Open Letter to Milan Kundera" published in *Commentary* in October 1984. My interest in the question increased after reading a lecture given on June 4, 1985, by Hugo Bütler, editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, before the Institut für Auslandforschung in Zurich. The title of this presentation was "Stichwort Mitteleuropa: Tatsachen, Ideen, Illusionen" (Catchword Mitteleuropa: Facts, Ideas, Illusions).

Hungarians are offended when anybody doubts that their country and Budapest belong to the West or at least to Mitteleuropa. That had been their attitude when part of Hungary was occupied by the Turks. Today they regard the Soviets as invaders. Their ability to bend but not to break is legendary. Every possibility of gaining a little elbowroom—be it in economic or political development—is exploited to the full.

In the summer 1985 election, the Hungarian government permitted the nomination of two candidates for every seat in the national parliament and the seating of forty-three members whose names had been selected by electoral assemblies and not by the party organizers. Jenö Fock, the former prime minister, and several other prominent Communists failed to be reelected. Some of the nonofficial candidates are genuine reformers, others are orthodox Communists. None of them appears to be a menace to the regime. An organized opposition does not exist. Representatives of the professions and from the service sector entered parliament in greater numbers than did blue-collar workers and farmers, who together form a minority today. The character of the parliament in this workers' and farmers' state has changed. The building in which the deputies meet is a copy of the parliament house at Westminster—a symbol of Hungary's long-standing Western orientation. The royal palace and other buildings overlooking the Danube from the Buda side of the river have been restored; the heavy damages caused by World War II have disappeared; and a Hilton Hotel has found its place between the palaces constructed after the liberation of Hungary from the Turks.

Budapest is the showcase of the Communist

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countries. Hordes of tourists from the West arrive by car, by train, by air, and by ship. They stay in hotels that find few equals in the United States—the breakfast is brought as ordered exactly on time—and a number of restaurants offer excellent fare. But much of the old joie de vivre has disappeared, as well as the elegance of Váci utca or Gerbauld's. An old joke comes to mind about a reunion of dogs from different countries, all of them showing enthusiasm about the grand style of life in Budapest until the Hungarian dog remarks, "But we are not allowed to bark!"

Most Hungarians may travel once a year to the West. Writers like György Konrád or ex-politicians like Andras Hegedüs publish in the West (but not in Hungary) books critical of the Communist regime and return home without being arrested. Western newspapers can be bought in some hotels. A bilingual newspaper, *Neueste Nachrichten—Daily News,* is published by the Hungarian state-owned news agency for tourists.

Budapest is the halfway house for countries under Soviet domination. In that city the discussion about a new Mitteleuropa is most vivid. Its loudest voice comes from György Konrád, born in 1933 and an ex-Communist. Even in a cellar restaurant where intellectuals like to meet, I overheard a lively discussion about the resurrection of Mitteleuropa—until a rock band drowned out every other sound and we had to concentrate on our exquisite desserts.

Konrád complains that Hungary has exchanged Hitler for Stalin. "Fact is," he states, "when America shows strength, the Russians are rather moderate, and when America practices compliance, the Russians are rather arrogant." Konrád hopes for a distancing of the European countries from the Warsaw Pact and the Atlantic Alliance. "The minimum that we could wish for honestly is the level of freedom Finland enjoys. Neutrality is self-evident." The United States should offer the Soviet Union a security guarantee under the condition that, in return, Moscow would grant the right of self-determination to the East European countries. Nobody can doubt that these countries would leave the Soviet sphere of domination. Konrád reveals the dilemma, however: "On no account are we West Europeans, but we are not East Europeans either." The alternative is to be Central European. Konrád believes a coalition of Central European states would constitute a region of peace and prosperity.

Past and present struggles about the rights of minorities—no European country is without national minorities—leave doubts about a peaceful future in a Mitteleuropa free from the menace of a superpower, be it the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, the Austrian Empire, and, what some call jokingly the Holy Byzantine Empire of the Turkish Nation, the Soviet Union. Who would belong to Mitteleuropa? What constitution would it create? Would it have a common language—German for instance? Innumerable questions begin where Konrád and others have left off. Dislike of the Soviet Union, and of Communism alone, does not provide a basis for a new unity or a new freedom. But drowning intellectuals grasp at the flimsy straw of Mitteleuropa.

The problematic nature of reviving Mitteleuropa becomes immediately evident after an old Ilyushin-18 has jolted us from Budapest to Prague. I asked a wise person for his opinion of Mitteleuropa and he answered cynically, "And shall we all grow side-whiskers like Franz Joseph?" The Czechs have not lived down their dislike of things German. But in their own capital city, the Czechs are overrun by wave after wave of German tourists, and so are the Hungarians in Budapest. While in the late forties, politeness led one to use a few words of the local language, nobody seems to care now. The language most commonly used is German or English, and the natives had better understand it. Not even a *děkuji vám,* or a *köszönöm szépen,* a thank-you, crosses the foreigners' lips. The phenomenon of tourism causing social change is not unknown. Never before have I seen such a degradation condoned by the governments for the sake of hard currency.

Slata Praha with its thousand towers has remained one of the most beautiful cities of the world. The neglect of past decades has given way to restorations. The Hradčany, where kings of Bohemia and emperors of the Holy Roman Empire ruled, where Thomas Garrigue Masaryk and Edward Beneš were succeeded by men who were president by the grace of Moscow and whose names are easily forgotten, has been renovated and cleaned up and made to look as if it had been built yester-

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day. Gustáv Husák, president of the republic, has left town to spend his vacation in the Soviet Union, which he does every year.

In the Czernin Palace, now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, bureaucrats go in and out. Between 1918 and 1938 the great powers listened to what was said by the Czechoslovak authorities. Edward Beneš had acquired an extraordinary prestige as foreign minister. His activity was so stupendous that Geza Szüllö, a Hungarian nobleman and member of the Prague Parliament, remarked with biting humor, "Sir, you are so busy that one might think you are not intelligent." Jan Masaryk "fell" to his death from a window of the palace after the Communist takeover of 1948. Prague remains famous for its defenestrations. Today the Czernin Palace and its inmates are reduced to insignificance.

Besides the palaces and churches of old Prague, the city has a newer center in Wenceslas Square. What sadness overcomes a visitor today walking up and down that wide expanse. Even in the first years after World War II it could sustain any comparison with Zurich or with Paris, while Vienna and Budapest still worked their way out of the ruins. Today Wenceslas Square has become a symbol of the terrible pauperization that the Communist regime has brought to a once prosperous and lively country. The shops are of an indescribable shabbiness, the people resigned and sad—the saddest of all, the many Palestinians hanging around the cafés who may or may not know to what purpose they are in the CSSR. Czechoslovakia's best export is tennis players. One wonders whether the jeunesse dorée that plays at lumpen proletariat in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Georgetown in the District of Columbia would feel at home on Wenceslas Square, where misery is not acted but suffered. Nobody seems to read newspapers. Not even *Rudé Pravo* can be found in the hotel. Most newsstands have disappeared. Radio and television create bridges to the outside world. Austrian and German television can be seen both in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

I visited the Old Jewish Cemetery with the tomb of the Rabbi Löw, the legendary creator of the Golem, and the nearby synagogues now transformed into museums, though many of their valuable cult objects were stolen by the Germans engaged in the Endlösung, which cost more than seventy-seven thousand Jewish lives in Prague alone. Swarms of German tourists, mostly from the German Democratic Republic, are led by guides through the museums. No one covers his head, no one speaks. We do not know what they think. Socialism has wiped out the guilt of the East Germans, while the West Germans, who have perpetrated democracy for forty years, are still held responsible for unforgivable deeds. Erich Honecker and Mikhail Gorbachev have no Bitburg problem.

Until 1956 in Hungary and 1968 in Czechoslovakia, most intellectuals defined themselves in relation to Communism. They were for it or against it. Today Communism as an ideal is dead. It exists as a power system that attracts opportunists.

When the eleven-hundredth anniversary of the death of Methodius, the apostle of the Slavs, was celebrated in Velehrad (Moravia) and in Levoca (Slovakia), more than one hundred thousand Catholics assembled in each town, demonstrating their Roman faith. The Communist ideologue Vasil Bilak's appeal to the Czechs, urging them to join the Orthodox Church to strengthen their Slav character, found not the slightest echo.

Charter 77, which fights a desperate rearguard action for the application of the principles of the Helsinki Accord, demands the departure of the eighty thousand Soviet troops who "temporarily" invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. The Soviet Union should undertake an "exemplary step toward a military disengagement" in Central Europe, the leaders of Charter 77 proclaim. The answer of the Czech government to this and other appeals is always the same: Václav Havel and other signatories of Charter 77 are arrested. Yet, in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Milan Kundera considers "the possibility of the Czech nation disappearing into the Russian empire . . . inconceivable." Meanwhile, "a deathlike torpor" prevails, according to Charter 77, in Czechoslovakia.

A common heritage can be found in the Central European region. If the present conditions continue, archaeologists will be needed to bring the remains of this heritage to light. So, for now, the construction of a new Mitteleuropa remains in the realm of nostalgic Utopia.

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Ice Storm

(for Elizabeth)

ROBERT WILJER

The long drive from the country hospital
at first was shrouded in wet thickly falling snow;
slush slicing out from passing cars
thudded against my Volkswagen. A heavy pall
of dirty clouds hung so low
I felt again the ceiling, walls, even the bars
of your stark ward. A partially covered field
mirrored back the gray-mottled marble floor.
As the day wore on, blinding sleet would pour
intermittently against the windshield.
Then suddenly the wipers started squeaking,
it unnerved me—the one time you let go, shrieking.

The sleet became fine rain. South wind, warm front.
Later, a freezing rain.
Once snow buntings swarmed past—like static grain
across the untuned TV set hooked up to blunt
your finely tuned pain. . . . Slowly in that dull March light
there evolved a glitter to the scene,
a thickening sheath of ice on poles, signs, trees—
the way your white smock would appear so bright,
the way the cupboards, dressing table, plastic screen
shone, your anguish waxing to new intensities. . . .

The landscape, even houses, were at last lacquered hard,
beautifully unmarred.
But on my car the glaze

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would build up and break free, shooting up and
sailing over; and then build up again—
an image down a corridor splintering, ablaze,
forming again: you in that wheelchair, specimen
for glossy tubes, and tranquilized. . . . I passed a stand
of maples—and I could hardly bear the stress—
their twisted limbs drooped—the rare exquisiteness
of your pain—wrapped in silvery light—utterly meaningless.

my darling
it was the fibres in my flesh my bones
strained snapped
bough after bough giving way
a shuddering crash and then another
it was my heart sundered
like some huge V-shaped elm
the clapping sound of ice on ice
the burden was the beauty of it pulled apart
as on a rack
the glaze shattering and shimmering
on the earth's crust
my darling

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The Quiet Proofs of Love

SAMUEL HAZO

When your son has grown up,
treat him like your brother.
Arab Proverb

Don't wait for definitions.
I've had
my fill of aftertalk
and overtalk, of meanings that don't
mean, of words not true
enough to be invisible, of all
those Januaries of the mind when
everything that happens happens
from the eyebrows up.
If truth
is in the taste and not
the telling, give me whatever
is and cannot be again—
like sherbet on the tongue, like love . . .
Paris defined is Paris
lost, but Paris loved
is always Orly in the rain,
broiled pork and chestnuts
near the rue de Seine,
the motorcade that sped de Gaulle
himself through Montparnasse.
Viva
the fool who said, "Show me
a man who thinks, I'll show
you a man who frowns."
Which
reminds me of Andrew, learning
to count by twos and asking,

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"Where is the end of counting?"
Let's settle for the salt and pepper
of the facts.
Oranges don't parse,
and no philosopher can translate
shoulders in defeat or how
it feels when luck's slim arrow
stops at you or why lovemaking's
not itself until it's made.
Let's breathe like fishermen who sit
alone together on a dock
and let the wind do all
the talking.
That way we'll see
that who we are is what
we'll be hereafter.
We'll learn
the bravery of trees that cannot
know "the dice of God
are always loaded."
We'll think
of life as one long kiss
since talk and kisses never mix.
We'll watch the architecture
of the clouds create themselves
like flames and disappear like laughter.

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REAPPRAISAL

My Encounter with Henry de Montherlant

RENEE WINEGARTEN

A good many years ago, at the Marigny Theatre, just off the Champs-Elysées, that admirable troupe led by Jean-Louis Barrault and his wife Madeleine Renaud was to perform *Malatesta*, a play by Henry de Montherlant. When I booked a seat, it was the actors who were the main attraction, for the author was then little more than a name to me. As ill luck would have it, there followed a transport strike: no métro, no buses. With the hope—vain, as it turned out—of finding a taxi, I set out to walk from the Hôtel Louvois in the rue de Richelieu to the Champs-Elysées. Night fell. I was still floundering about in the place de la Concorde when a courteous, elderly, goateed Frenchman, member of a species now extinct, pointed me in the right direction. Without that gentleman, who might well have issued from the same kind of gentry as Montherlant himself, I should have missed one of the great theatrical experiences of my life.

With *Malatesta* I had, in short, stumbled upon one of the masters of the French word, the heir of Chateaubriand and Flaubert, lyric poet, essayist, novelist as well as dramatist, who aroused adulation in some quarters and loathing in others. As I learned more about his art, I began to wonder why Montherlant was less well known and appreciated in the English-speaking world than his contemporaries and near-contemporaries: the surrealist and Communist, Aragon (with whom he was at school); Malraux, the legendary anti-Fascist and Gaullist minister (whose work he admired); the equivocal, many-faceted Cocteau; or Céline, the savagely dark anti-Semitic anarchist—all of whom were involved in the modern ideological struggle or associated with the artistic avant-garde. And that query would lead me into a quagmire where literature, morality, and politics were inextricably intermingled.

Malatesta, which impressed me so much, was written when Montherlant was forty-eight, in 1943–44, the last year of the German occupation of France and not long before the liberation. The play carries with it something of the ambience of cruelty, suspicion, and fear endemic in France at that period. Montherlant's protagonist, Sigismondo Malatesta, the fifteenth-century *condottiere* of Rimini, is a man with a woman's nervous temperament, a gifted egoist who appears as a monster of incoherence. A lover of the art and literature of antiquity (like the dramatist himself), he is devoted to his city and his wife, while indulging his passion for a thirteen-year-old girl. Offended by Pope Paul II, whom he astonishingly rushes off to kill, Malatesta ends by placing himself in the pontiff's power, asking him to become his confessor—a scene derived from a traumatic moment in Montherlant's own boyhood.

To his vain hired scribe, Porcellio, whom he has humiliated, Malatesta is engaged in dictating a flattering account of his own life and exploits, in an attempt to impose his greatness upon posterity. Porcellio takes advantage of a moment when his master is most vulnerable, poisons him, and burns the manuscript (as it were, the beloved child of literature) before his eyes. Malatesta dies screaming—instead of dying with the noble stoicism of his hero Pompey the Great—and rejected

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by the shades of the great men of antiquity whose company he had so ardently longed to join. This poetic, profoundly ironic ending was Montherlant's own invention, for the Malatesta of history died in his bed. At the time, of course, I did not comprehend how central this theme would prove to be in Montherlant's own career. The desire to imprint a certain image of himself can now be seen as dominant in Montherlant's life in literature, as can, sooner or later, the inevitable destruction of that image.

To find out more about Montherlant's life and work did not at first seem too difficult in the years after my visit to *Malatesta*. A schoolfriend of his had written an account of the writer's early period. Others—colleagues, admirers, critics, women friends, or ex-friends—produced studies of his writings. I soon began to realize, though, that much of the biographical detail was provided by Montherlant himself, so where did legend finish and hard fact begin? He gave innumerable interviews, published his journals in several volumes, added notes to his essays and prefaces and postfaces to his plays. To some, this looked like coquetry; to others, it represented a sincere desire to explain his intentions because he felt out of tune with modern society. Yet, while providing this fund of information, Montherlant made it tantalizingly plain that there were certain important aspects of his private life that he intended to keep private. And he succeeded in doing so, at least as far as the larger public was concerned.

It is only recently that some of the varnish has been removed from the picture. In 1977, five years after Montherlant committed suicide, the novelist Roger Peyrefitte, author of *Les Amitiés particulières*, revealed his former friend's sexual fixation. Every day, at a set hour, Montherlant would sally forth on the same circuit of the northern Paris boulevards in order to pick up young working-class boys. This obsession, which gratified his love of living dangerously, had led to numerous brushes with the police that somehow had been hushed up. Moreover, the vaunted proponent of the virtue of manly courage had lived for years in terror of discovery and blackmail. Montherlant gave as his reason for suicide his fear of approaching blindness and senility, whereas (according to Peyrefitte) he took his life because his increasing disabilities prevented him from pursuing his obsessional quest.

Certainly, throughout his writings, Montherlant expressed a tender, fatherly concern for the thirteen-year-old boy, often portrayed as superior to his parents in quality. The sublimated love of a youth for a younger boy provides the theme of his dramatic masterpiece, *La Ville dont le prince est un enfant*, a theme that was treated more realistically but with characteristic discretion in later versions of his novel, *Les Garçons*, with its pederastic network. All the same, in *Les Garçons*, the central figure of Alban (the hero of two early semi-autobiographical novels, *Le Songe* and *Les Bestiaires*) remains largely a figure of lofty ideals, while it is his schoolfellow Linsbourg who develops into the obsessive pederast. No doubt a homoerotic element had appeared in the novel *La Rose de sable*, where Lieutenant Auligny offered to share his mistress, a little Arab girl (modeled, it would now seem, on a boy prostitute), with his painter friend Guiscart—just as Montherlant and Peyrefitte were to share boys they picked up in the late thirties.

If Montherlant did not want the nature of his sexual predilections to be discovered by his public, in an age familiar with Gide and Genet, it was doubtless because he saw how knowledge of his pedophilia would undermine the image of himself and his high ideals that he had so sedulously constructed. He indulged his sardonic sense of humor in cultivating the air of one who scoured the streets for fresh female prey (like his protagonists, Léon de Coantré, Guiscart, Costals) and who could do what he liked with women. It is inevitable that awareness of Montherlant's obsessive pederasty—perhaps, along with incest, the last sexual taboo because of the dreaded corruption of youth—should cast a new light on his entire oeuvre, forcing us to read it differently. For instance, the provocative justification of a forbidden act (intercourse with an animal) in his dramatic prose poem *Pasiphaé*, and elsewhere, would now seem to relate obliquely to his own inner struggles. His case shows how biography, despised in some circles, can still serve as one useful tool among many in the search for greater understanding of an author's work.

Henry de Montherlant was born in 1895,

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not (as he always maintained) in 1896, according to his most recent, conscientious biographer, Pierre Sipriot, in an important study of Montherlant unmasked (*Montherlant sans masque*, Vol. 1. *L'Enfant prodigue 1895–1932*, Laffont). This change of date was largely owing to a desire to manipulate his war record. He belonged with the class mobilized in 1914, but was declared unfit for active service because of an enlarged heart and deformed thorax. It was possible for young men in his position to volunteer, but instead Montherlant spent two years in his uncle's insurance firm. In 1917 he was called up as an auxiliary, working first on a farm and later as a secretary at headquarters. He wanted to have the experience of the firing line, to be slightly wounded and if possible decorated, and get back to his writing—his prime concern since the age of nine. In June 1918, during a bombardment, he was in fact wounded behind the lines while learning how to shoot. He always wanted people to think that he had volunteered for combat duty and that he had deliberately declined to become an officer in order to stay with the underprivileged in the ranks. Why was this fantasy so very important to him?

One reason was literature and the kind of literature he then wanted to write. In his admiration for the influential though now largely neglected novelist, Maurice Barrès (who also left an indelible mark on the legend-creating Malraux), Montherlant began by embracing the early "cultivation of the ego" as well as the later nationalism of Barrès. As a would-be nationalist writer, it was therefore vital for him to have a good war record. Evidently, he felt the need to place himself in the line of "the male order" of his moving war novel, *Le Songe;* and he continued to do so with his postwar four-year stint as secretary of the charity set up to build the Ossuary of Douaumont, the memorial to those who died at the battle of Verdun.

Montherlant's strange family situation helps to explain his passion for virility, exemplified by participation in sport and bullfighting as well as in war. An only child, he issued from the section of the lesser nobility that had never really come to terms with the consequences of the French Revolution. He himself always retained something of the attitudes of his proud father, punctilious about honor, a reactionary who rejected such newfangled "republician" inventions as the telephone. Yet the elder Montherlant, undemonstrative and remote, who died in 1914, took little interest in the boy's upbringing, which was left to his mother and grandmother. Ever since her son's birth, his mother had been an invalid, concentrating upon him a possessive love, which as a youth he found hard to bear. She relived her own girlhood in society by discussing with her son his amorous encounters with both sexes.

When Montherlant's mother died of tuberculosis in 1915, his grandmother took her place, sharing with him an equally unusual and frank relationship. Montherlant's grandmother not only used her social connections to pull strings for him during the war, but served as the confidante of his amours. He told her that his homosexuality was a form of narcissistic egoism, a quest for himself in the child. To her, he owned his horror of femininity, his belief that women were inferior creatures—a vein that he was later to exploit exuberantly in the notorious anti-feminist quartet of novels, *Les Jeunes Filles* (based on his on-off betrothal to a young woman called Jeanine and his relations with several women intellectuals). Such feelings coincided also with the strong anti-feminist current that flowed from the latter part of the nineteenth century. These feelings had been reinforced when his South American girlfriend broke with him in 1918.

Still, by then the deepest emotional experience of his life had long since occurred, in 1911–12, when he was at Sainte-Croix de Neuilly, a liberal Catholic school. One of the teacher-priests publicly denounced him for his association with a younger boy named Philippe. Montherlant kept his promise to place their connection on a nobler footing and to promote reform. But apparently this priest took an excessive interest in Philippe. So the adolescent Montherlant was maneuvered into sacrificing himself, and was expelled in a particularly inelegant way. Despite this treatment, he always felt that at Sainte-Croix he had known all that was finest and best. He spent the rest of his life brooding on the experience and writing variations on it and on the motives of those involved. Indeed, a fortnight before committing sucide, he claimed that Philippe was the only person he had ever

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truly loved. From this experience came his conviction that good actions neither bring satisfaction nor have the effect they are supposed to have; that sacrifice, however admirable in itself, is useless.

A good deal of the early Montherlant can be seen as a struggle—which would prove only partially successful—to distance himself from the preconceptions of his upper-class milieu. Traces of the influence of Action Française, the proto-Fascist movement led by Charles Maurras, can be found in the 1924 version of *Les Olympiques*, but by the second version, issued in 1938, Montherlant had erased his Maurrasian-style attack on liberal democracy. Still, he retained the passage where he preferred a gang of toughs obedient to their leader to an anarchic body of respectable folk. Such sentiments would have pleased the writer-adventurer, Gabriele d'Annunzio, whom Montherlant knew personally and admired, not least for the seizure of Fiume. Like so many of his artist contemporaries, Montherlant had fallen under the spell of Nietzsche, whose aesthetic elitism carried a powerful appeal. With Nietzsche he was drawn to the dangerous urge to pass beyond good and evil—for reasons that now seem more readily understandable in the light of his secret life.

At one moment in the early twenties, Montherlant had thought of engaging in nationalist politics, but had changed his mind. Then he began to move away from Barrès, criticizing that writer's commitment to the nationalist cause as a betrayal of art. A certain right-wing aura clung nevertheless to his own work, despite his concern for the well-being of underprivileged youth, and despite his sympathy, mingled with distrust, for a Jewish soldier, Roger Dantziger (called Maurice Leipziger in *Mors et Vita*), who was killed in the war. Montherlant could still vividly recall that Jewish comrade nearly fifty years afterward. For, notwithstanding his upbringing and associations, and a certain equivocation of expression common to many aspects of his writing, even an occasional note of xenophobia, Montherlant showed no trace of the virulent anti-Semitism that would disfigure the work and conduct of so many of his colleagues—Jouhandeau, Drieu La Rochelle, Céline, Rebatet, Brasillach, among others.

In 1925, two years after his grandmother's death, Montherlant felt free to travel south and follow his bent. In Spain—so he let it be well known—he fought bulls on private breeding grounds (and in old age liked to insist that, unlike Hemingway, he had been more than a mere spectator). He yielded above all to sensuality and hedonism during his travels, and especially in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, where his sexual tastes could be readily satisfied. It was during this period of considerable disarray that Montherlant formulated his notion of "syncretism and alternation"—his very personal way of remaining "above the battle" by refusing to settle for any single aspect of existence. On the contrary, he would accept and embrace all of them as equally right and justifiable, and alternate among them.

This convenient notion, supported by quotations from authors ancient and modern, enabled Montherlant to elude contradictory and opposing elements, to evade the problems of choice as well as of responsibility. An avowed atheist, he adopted the standpoint of Ecclesiastes—a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted—without the injunction to fear God. Eventually, all opposites would appear to him to be equivalent in the face of death. This destructive outlook should have prevented him from taking a stand on any subject. It was certainly an attitude that ran counter to the main current of the day, when many writers felt impelled to take sides in the ideological struggle between fascism and communism.

Nor could Montherlant himself sustain such lofty detachment. For in North Africa he witnessed the unpleasant face of French colonial rule. He was deeply shocked when he perceived how the North African Arabs were often humiliated, cheated, and exploited by their French masters. In 1930–32, under the influence of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, he wrote a long novel, *La Rose de sable*, where Auligny, a decent, conventional young officer, through love of an Arab girl and sympathy for her ill-treated people, finds that he can no longer serve in the army. Ironically, Auligny is killed in a riot by the very Arabs with whose cause he sympathizes (while Guiscart, the hedonist artist, survives by prudent cowardice). Rather like the unfortunate Auligny, Montherlant must have discovered that his views on French colonialism were shared by

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writers on the Left, and principally by the Communists, who were busily seeking to exploit the theme of anti-imperialism.

Meanwhile, on his return to France, Montherlant's fellow countrymen struck him as being thoroughly demoralized. He decided not to publish *La Rose de sable*—the love story was extracted in 1954, but the entire novel (though still with passages omitted) did not appear until 1968, six years after the end of the Algerian War, when it had the political impact of a damp squib. If published in the thirties, it would surely have caused a stir. All the high-minded reasons that the author gave over the years for not publishing the book ultimately put patriotism before the truth and the cause of the oppressed. Perhaps he feared the destruction of his image through doing the Communists' work. Above all, he was governed by his sense of the pointlessness of commitment. Futility is certainly the most potent impression left by the novel, if we trust the tale rather than the teller.

Given Montherlant's skepticism, nihilism, and Nietzschean-style contempt for the bourgeois herd, it seems surprising that this proud knight of nothingness spent so much time in his essays trying to bring about a change of attitude in his countrymen, rather as he had sought to engage in the moral reform of his school. The word *moral* here has nothing to do with good and evil. His morality is one of "quality," where courage, love of risk, honor, magnanimity are supreme, and scorn for mediocrity is essential. The merest hint of baseness in a person's tastes or associations (a fondness for trashy films and magazines, or for a stupid mongrel bitch) is enough to condemn that person to rejection or even death. It was this apparently uncontrollable moralizing tendency that would lead Montherlant toward disaster during the Second World War.

Ever since the end of the First World War, Montherlant had expected Germany to fight again, and he firmly believed that victorious France, with all its advantages, must stay strong to counter this threat. His own very idiosyncratic and fairly brief experience on the fringes of the army had left him with a chivalric notion of a single combat between honorable enemies, whether ancient Greeks or Japanese samurai. It was his insistence on France's need to be equal to the threat that made him one of the most outspoken French opponents of the appeasement and sellout of Czechoslovakia to Hitler at Munich in 1938. He saw through what he called the "totalitarian enchanters and sub-enchanters" (publicly opposing Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia), but he also envisaged them as a stimulus to French effort.

Montherlant's respect for Germany, "with many reservations," as the honorable challenger in a sporting contest, encouraged him to address Rive-Gauche, a lecture group devoted to Franco-German rapprochement that turned out to be a front for Nazi propaganda. There were many elements in his thinking—the need for virile strength and an iron hand in France, the elimination of a lesser humanity, the inferiority of French "shop girl's morality" (rooted in Christianity, pacifism, humanitarianism, feminine self-delusion) vis-à-vis the "leonine morality" of Germany—that were related to those current beyond the Rhine. At no time did Montherlant appear to realize that worse crimes than mediocrity were being committed in the thirties, and that the rise of Hitler and of Nazism had changed the nature of the enemy and of the ball game.

With the humiliating defeat of France in 1940, which Montherlant witnessed as war correspondent for the left-wing weekly *Marianne,* he thought of leaving for Spain but remained in the unoccupied zone until May 1941. At first, Montherlant (with Gide and Mauriac) gave his support to the Vichy regime. For a while he doubtless felt that its program of national reform coincided with his own, but he was soon listing his points of disagreement. He had upbraided his compatriots (and, to a lesser degree, himself) for the debacle in a bitter outburst that quite naturally outraged them and was to cost him dearly. In *Le Solstice de juin,* in abasement before the victors, he sang of the turn of the solar wheel that now replaced Christianity with paganism and of the Germans' mission to destroy bourgeois and ecclesiastical morality "from the shores of the Atlantic to the steppes of Russia." True, he also suggested that in their turn France and Christianity would revive one day, and he expressed the wish that the French should again be "an insolent nation," but these words made less impact than the others.

According to that inveterate gossip, Roger Peyrefitte, it was because Montherlant was

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roughed up by the Vichy police on being discovered with a youth in a sordid hotel in Marseilles that he decided to return to occupied Paris. He already knew Karl Epting, now head of the German Institute in the capital, who (with its assistant-director, Karl-Heinz Bremer) managed to have the Nazi ban on *Le Solstice de juin* lifted and offered him protection. And so Montherlant was "cornered," as one critic has expressed it.

With his desire for Nietzschean *amor fati*, the author of *Le Songe* accepted the German occupation. In this he resembled the vast majority of his countrymen. But why did he not prefer silence to writing for the press, or confine himself to producing works of art, like his first major play, *La Reine morte*, performed by the Comédie-Française in 1942? If patriotism prevented him from publishing *La Rose de sable*, why did it not prevent him from publishing certain essays in *Le Solstice de juin*? Gide's former secretary, Lucien Combelle, who worked on the pro-Hitler paper *La Gerbe*, commented on Montherlant's contributions to it written in "sub-Nietzschean style." Combelle distinguished between those who were actively committed to the German cause and those who were seduced, like Montherlant, "but whose style was to stay uncommitted." The latter group wrote because writing was their profession, observed Combelle, and because the German presence did not make them suffer unduly.

Montherlant preserved his friendship for his German translator, Karl-Heinz Bremer, a convinced Nazi (if the more open-minded Gerhard Heller is to be believed), who was killed on the Eastern Front. Gerhard Heller, a Francophile officer, visited Montherlant to try to persuade him to accompany a party of noted French writers to Weimar in September 1942. Montherlant declined, but not because he refused to collaborate. "I have given enough public and private proofs of my hope and my faith in an improvement in Franco-German relations," he told Heller. "I have done so before and since this war, quite recently in contributing to your review *Deutschland-Frankreich*." The reasons Montherlant adduced so diplomatically all turned upon his nervous debility where public engagements were concerned. Following this interview, Montherlant plied Heller with amiable letters requesting various personal privileges. After the war, however, he gave Heller the cold shoulder when the latter in his turn requested a favor. Montherlant replied to him through his literary agent.

With the Liberation of France, Montherlant knew some uncomfortable moments. He went into hiding. The Writers' National Committee, the Communist-dominated organization that issued from the Resistance, complained about *Le Solstice de juin*. His case was investigated by French military intelligence, but no cause for action against him was found. The worst he underwent was being forbidden to publish for a year, but even that punishment was retroactive. Certainly, if Montherlant's conduct is compared with that of ardent collaborators like Drieu La Rochelle, Rebatet, Brasillach, and others who made no secret of their racialism and desire for Nazi victory, or who denounced their luckless compatriots to the Nazis, then the role of the author of *Service inutile* was indeed minor. He produced a document in his own defense, noting how he had refused to allow *Mors et Vita* to be published in German translation without the narrative about his dead Jewish comrade—a piece considered philo-Semitic in Nazi Germany—and how his flat had been searched by the Gestapo in March 1944. The document served little purpose because he conveniently omitted to allude to the phrases with which he had compromised himself.

From 1945 onward, Montherlant ceased to produce moralizing essays and devoted himself to writing a series of shattering plays, in contemporary or historical dress, many of which obliquely reflected his wounded pride at the shadow cast on his reputation. For instance, the longing for withdrawal from a base and materialistic society pierces through *Le Maître de Santiago*, set in Avila in the age of the conquistadores. In *Le Cardinal d'Espagne*, it is the vanity of ambition, action, and achievement that predominates, with the final resonant comment on the powerful sixteenth-century Cardinal Cisneros—"One day people will no longer even judge him." Civil war, a theme Montherlant felt had dominated France throughout his lifetime, is interpreted in *La Guerre civile* through internecine strife in the Rome of Pompey and Caesar. In his drama, as in his superb tragicomic novel, *Le Chaos et la nuit*, which turns upon the fate of Celestino, a disintegrating exiled Spanish an-

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archist, a relic of the Spanish Civil War, there is a profound loathing of the modern world in all its manifestations. This Flaubertian rejection of modernity may now be seen as an aspect of Montherlant's narcissism and of his belief that the best he ever knew had occurred in 1911–12. Perhaps Sartre was thinking of Montherlant as well as of his youthful self when he denounced the influence of Flaubertian aestheticism.

In his last years, Montherlant, too, like Celestino, his Spanish anarchist, was physically disintegrating. He never fully recovered from an attack of sunstroke that left him subject to dizzy spells, falls, and agoraphobia. He lost the sight of his left eye, apparently not in an accident but, according to Peyrefitte, through being beaten up by a group of boys on leaving a cinema. Having talked much and eloquently about suicide in his writings (ever since as a boy he had been moved by the suicide of Petronius in Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *Quo Vadis?*), on September 21, 1972, Montherlant took his own life in high Stoic Roman style, by consuming cyanide (acquired from his doctor at the Liberation), and by shooting himself in the temple. With the caution that accompanied his bravado, he had prepared two pistols in case one failed.

Often, when a writer commits suicide, a cult develops, but not in the case of Montherlant, despite his supreme artistry. Perhaps this is partly because he is so elusive a writer. We know where to find those authors who took a definite ideological stand. We would know where to find one who remained totally detached, if total detachment were feasible in dangerous times. We do not know quite where to find the alternating Montherlant—and evidently, that elusiveness and self-contradiction, like the Roman mask and the reputation for womanizing, formed part of a deliberate and necessary strategy to put people off the scent. The pre-1940 poetic projection of himself as the happy Olympian creator, free to do as he likes in love and art, was clearly a wish fulfillment. There are too many characters in Montherlant's novels, from the eccentric Léon de Coantré in *Les Célibataires* to Exupère, the neurotic librarian of *Un Assassin est mon maître*, whose pathetic vulnerability and nervous sensibility would point to a very different type of creator—one who, in private, could even deride the poses he adopted on the public facade.

Here is the writer who, in the best French tradition, is primarily concerned with psychological motive, often finding it governed by physiological states; who recognizes that man's worst enemy lies within himself; and who perceives that the great and powerful are never as they would like to appear. As a young man, Montherlant wrote to a friend with damaging lucidity: "I have in my character that sort of elevation which belongs to the imagination rather than the soul, and which deceives some people by raising them above themselves in a factitious way, only to leave them, when it relapses, reduced to what they are." Hence the equivocal spirituality in plays like *Le Maître de Santiago* or *Port-Royal*, written by a convinced atheist who was not averse to letting people think that he was about to return to the bosom of the Church. Hence, too, the position of Montherlant today, the great artist reduced to what he was, and all the more tragically human for that.

Not long before Montherlant's death, a friend of mine, a French journalist who was aware of my long-standing interest in the writer's work, learned that a third party could arrange for me to visit the author of *Malatesta*. I procrastinated until it was too late, thus becoming one of the few admirers of Montherlant's art who never penetrated into the somewhat dilapidated apartment on the Quai Voltaire, described by all and sundry, with its antique busts, its Roman military mask, its funerary Eros. I do not entirely regret my hesitation. It now seems quite fitting that my encounter with Montherlant—who was seduced by literature and vainly sacrificed so much to his idea of it—should have remained for me in the realm of literature.

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About Men

JAY NEUGEBOREN

DALLAS (AP)—*In the "Alan Aldaesque" trend toward sensitive, caring men, the true test of whether a man has found intimacy is to ask a simple question. "Go ask a man how many men he's intimate with," said the author of a new book on the subject. "And watch him run." . . . Intimacy, though very difficult to achieve, is simply opening up and being vulnerable enough to share fears, hopes, dreams, love—one's self, said Michael E. McGill, a Southern Methodist University professor and author of "The McGill Report on Male Intimacy."*

It had been a pretty hard year, all things considered, a year that had included betrayal, adultery, degradation, separation, divorce, depression, heavy drinking, death, illness, two suicide attempts, unemployment, and loss of my six kids in a brutal custody battle, so that by the time my father showed up at my door one snowy evening in May, his 1957 blue and white Winnebago parked in the driveway, I'd fallen more than three months behind in my reading of the "About Men" columns from the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. The truth, which I was too embarrassed to share with him, was that, when I read the stories these other men told about how they had suffered the worst that life could fling at them but had coped by learning to be open and vulnerable and sharing, it made me feel pretty inadequate.

"Listen, Billy Boy," my father declaimed, gesturing to the world outside. "It's time for you and me to hit that old open road!" Tears came to my eyes. *Billy Boy!* He'd called me Billy Boy, just the way he used to when I was a kid and we'd be out in the barn together, him going at me with a willow switch while telling me that the main thing I had to learn in life was never to let people get close to you, never to trust anybody.

Snow came swirling into the empty living room, making wonderful arabesques in the air, then settling gently onto the cracked green linoleum, onto the empty peanut butter jars and bourbon bottles, rimming their edges with magical shapes that reminded me of spun sugar and county fairs. My father surveyed the scene, but he didn't close the door. He shouted that it was about time we got to know one another, that we should feel free to ask one another for whatever we needed. I asked him if he minded closing the door. All I had on was a T-shirt and jeans, and the temperature was below zero. He laughed and said that he respected my space—I sure had plenty of *that*—and then he slammed the door shut and stomped into the kitchen, searching for food and liquor.

Was it only a year ago, I mused, since he had last come through town and we'd been sitting around a warm house filled with laughter and children and furniture? There's been a lot of water under the bridge since then, I said. Lots of water in the ceiling too, he noted, pointing to the stains that blotted the crumbling Sheetrock overhead, grim reminders that when the upstairs toilet overflowed these days I didn't have the will to do anything about it. I didn't have a plunger either, I explained. Jenny had gotten that in the divorce settlement. She'd gotten everything

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else too, pretty much, except for the house, which I'd been forced to second mortgage to the hilt in order to keep up with child support and alimony payments.

My father sat on the kitchen counter, his boots in the sink. Never one to camouflage his feelings, my Dad let me know straightaway just how much of a wimp and a coward he thought I was. He needed food, alcohol, money, and a warm bed, and he was furious and foulmouthed because I didn't have them. Yet as I huddled in fear next to the pantry door, I imagined for a fleeting instant that he and Mom and I were a family again, and gradually I summoned up the courage to tell him all that had happened since last we had met.

Things had gone bad right after he'd left town a year before, when I found out that Jenny was cheating on me with four of my best friends. All those weekends I thought she was working at the local Woman's Survival Center, she'd been flying down to the Caribbean with my buddies and paying for the trips out of our joint savings. What I suppose I should have done was to share my feelings with Jenny and to get the two of us into family counseling together so that we could have learned just why our interpersonal relationship had broken down. Instead, all I'd been able to do was scream and weep and want to beat the living daylights out of her. I went after my friends with a shotgun and would have killed all of them if not for the fact that I pumped myself so full of Jack Daniels that I wound up totaling my pickup truck against a telephone pole, thereby managing to break three ribs, my right arm, my left ankle, and my collarbone. The rest was a blur of history that I saw through the amber haze of Old Crow. Little Billy Junior, our six-year-old, came down with leukemia; William, my eight-year-old, was killed in a freak sledding accident; two of our three teenage girls, Wilhelmina and Wilma, got pregnant and had abortions; Willie, my seventeen-year-old, enlisted in the Marines and got three toes and his nose blown off by a grenade; and I lost my job as supervisor of recreational therapy at the local Alzheimer Institute and Old Age Home. While I knew that what I should have done in order to get in touch with my true feelings was to open myself up emotionally in order to understand the real sources of my pain, hostility, and unhappiness, the only thing I felt like doing was getting bombed out of my mind. That, and killing myself, I confessed, looking at my father with moist eyes.

My Dad didn't even blink. I showed him the scars on my wrists, where I'd sliced myself open with the ragged edges of the lids from old Spam cans, and he shook his head and allowed as to how there were some things in life that a man still had to do by himself, and that suicide was probably one of them. He knew from personal experience how hard it was to do things right when you were totally blotto.

He got down from the counter then, kicked me hard in the kidneys, and said that it was time to move our butts out. First, though, we got totally smashed on my last bottle of Tennessee Chicken, not saying much to one another, but feeling, I sensed, the slight awkwardness that came from performing an act together that we had never performed before. And when we were done, and had puked our guts out, and I'd carried all my "About Men" columns out to the Winnebago, we burned the house down and took off into the night, just the two of us, father and son, without any thought as to where we were heading, or for how long, or why!

That was the beauty of it. It was going to be a new start for the two of us, and the roads and the campgrounds of America were going to be the arena wherein we bravely confronted all the old resentments that had made each of us, in our separate lives, such miserable and utter failures. He may have been a sleazy and vulgar con artist who had spent a good portion of his life serving sentences for extortion, petty larceny, and armed robbery, but he was still my Dad.

So we traversed the great continent, from Maine to New Hampshire, from Mississippi to Louisiana, from Connecticut to Rhode Island, and each night, when we would hole down in some abandoned campground, or in the deserted parking lot of a dead mall, I would find myself yearning for the day when the stirrings of my heart could reach into his and help transform the negative uses of his potential into constructive and positive channels. I talked to him about what I'd felt when I was a child watching him and Mom go at one another with frying pans and screwdrivers and

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tire irons. I tried to get him to understand what I felt had gone so wrong there, and how perhaps if they had been able to talk it out in a supportive environment and learned to sincerely forgive one another, he wouldn't have beaten us up so much.

Yet as our journey progressed—no sooner, in fact, than our first night out—all he seemed to want from me was that I go out and provide for his needs, and he didn't care how I did it. I thought at first that this might be his special way of showing that he believed in me, but by and by, and especially after he began banging me around each time I came back to the camper without having gotten him what he wanted, I began to suspect that his inner self, estranged for so many years from his ability to share his true feelings with a significant other, had gotten the best of him. And when I tried to probe gently about his own childhood, he went berserk, cursing out *his* father and smashing old perfume bottles and hauling off on me. When I regained consciousness, I began reading to him from my favorite "About Men" columns—my last resort—hoping that he would find in them the same solace and inspiration I had once found, and that the two of us could turn together to the words of others for the wisdom we so clearly lacked. When I did that, though, it only released his full fury. He threw me across his back, carried me from the camper, and hurled me savagely into the woods. Still, as I nestled down among pine needles and bear dung, it occurred to me that in his own fumbling yet vicious way my Dad might be trying to alert me to the enormous mistake I had made when I'd been foolish enough once again to do what he had always warned me not to do—to trust another human being, one who was, I was forced to conclude, just as big a bastard now as he had always been.

I haven't seen my father since, yet on the very next morning, sitting in my window seat on a Greyhound Bus and looking out through a film of grime and dust at the dawn of a new day, I was already feeling more comfortable with my decision than I was with the rest of my life. And as the bus moved onto the open road, I felt strangely yet impossibly renewed, for my father and I, in our own brutal and very sick ways, had finally shown one another the totality of who we were.

I had left him behind, and with him were all the "About Men" columns I would never read, and never want to read again. I now understood that getting to know somebody took hard work and could surprise you in dreadful ways—that you probably couldn't get to know another human being very well in a single cross-country trip or even in a thousand well-edited words. The bus glided onto the interstate, and I began to realize that the journey with my father had taught me something I'd known once upon a time, had nearly lost, and was now beginning to retrieve. The further I got from him, the better I felt. Everything was going to turn out wonderfully, I sensed, for I was, at last, beginning to regain my fear of intimacy.

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Vauvenargues

C. H. SISSON

Vauvenargues is hardly the most fashionable of writers. He has a further distinction, that there never was a time when his work was fashionable, yet for some two hundred and fifty years there has never been a time when he might not have been said to have friends and admirers. He has a firm place in that row of French moralists that includes La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld, to name no others in a rich tradition—moralists, that is to say, not in the minatory Puritan sense but as observers who lived in the world and recorded their findings in more or less summary fashion. In a time crowded with specialists who claim to know—and some of whom actually do know—more than the rest of us about some aspect of human behavior, it is to be expected that such observers should encounter a certain neglect, if not scorn. They are, however, no more to be despised than poets, whose subject matter no one expects to be limited by the diplomas or employments that happen to be theirs.

The subject matter of the reflections of Luc de Clapiers, marquis de Vauvenargues, was collected in the course of a life that did not extend quite to thirty-two years and that was spent in milieux not particularly favored by the lore of the twentieth century. He was the son of a nobleman and spent most of his adult life as an army officer. Lest these circumstances should seem to raise him further out of the common run of life than was actually the case, it should be remembered that the smaller provincial noblesse—mere gentry in English terms—could and often did live in an austere state of economy that would have been far from recommending itself to the more prosperous members of the bourgeoisie, while entertaining far more restrictive notions of what was proper for them by way of a career. They lived in a system of privilege that left them little freedom of movement and excluded them from the sort of spoil that might be available to the successful operator at Versailles.

The few glimpses we get of life at the château of Vauvenargues are of a highly domesticated scene. Vauvenargues writes to Saint-Vincens in November 1740: "It is only a couple of leagues from here to Aix, but I dare not suggest you come: the house is full of people; the whole family is here, father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother: it would bore you too much. Besides, no furnished room . . . still, if you don't mind an uncomfortable night and a bad supper. . . ." It appears that there was no money to spare for Luc, eldest son though he was; certainly his parents would not spare it for any project beyond a limited routine. Vauvenargues more than once speaks of a desire to visit England—"to see a flourishing country"—but it was out of the question; even a stay in Paris could hardly be funded. How much of this was meanness or mere desire for dominance on his parents' part it is impossible to say, but life at Vauvenargues was certainly without luxury by the standards of the time.

There are here and there in a correspondence that is not rich in personal details indications of strain in Luc's relations with his parents, and his father may well have been, as Henri Bonnier—hardly the most convincing of editors—suggests, "l'homme dur et rigide, l'homme tout d'une pièce, plein de maximes sévères, enivré de sa vertu, esclave des vieilles idées qu'il n'a point approfondies," whom Vauvenargues condemns in a letter of March 13, 1740, but the context demands a

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certain caution on the subject. Allowance must certainly be made for Luc's express reservation that his father's severity was accompanied by "great virtues, a solid mind, and a male eloquence"—qualities that the son, who can in no wise be made out to be a man of 1968, the year of Bonnier's edition, certainly admired. His discussion of the great men of Rome and of Le Grand Condé makes it clear that he was less averse to an overbearing hero than we, who have seen too many of them.

The virtues of Joseph de Clapiers, the father, were real and public. Luc was born in 1715. In 1720–21 there was a plague in Aix, which carried off between seven to eight thousand people. Joseph de Clapiers was then the chief magistrate of the town; he was also the only one to stay there during the plague, doing—it may be assumed with rigor—all the things that a chief magistrate ought to do. The family, meanwhile, were at Vauvenargues, no doubt daily expecting news of his sickness and death. Joseph survived, however, and it was to his conduct during these months that he owed the marquisate that Luc inherited. The man thus honored was no parvenu but one of the old nobility of Provence; an ancestor had been governor of Hyères early in the fourteenth century. His son, who is reputed to have been of a weak constitution, in poor health, of "an excessive timidity," and who became in his adolescence a passionate reader of Plutarch, is unlikely to have been unimpressed by these events. Certainly the "old ideas" had not lost their force in his own mind, which, however, tried restlessly to find the proper place for them in the ordinary world of his own day.

At twenty Luc found employment in the *régiment du roi*—the Guards, as one might say. Bonnier, anxious to clear his subject from any imputation of military spirit, is rather supercilious about Vauvenargues's years of garrison service and even, so far as may be, of his campaigns. However, if anything is certain about Luc de Clapiers, it is that his military service was anything but offhand. This was the world he was immersed in, boring enough no doubt for the most part and not spent in company of his choice, at Besançon, Arras, Rheims, Verdun, Metz—the places speak sufficiently of his duties. Certainly the young man who was to become, at an early age, one of the most brilliant—though admittedly not one of the best-known—writers of the eighteenth century, did not lead what could be called a literary life. Writing from Arras on June 30, 1739, he says: "In the last couple of years I have not read for a quarter of an hour a day, taking one day with another. . . . There have been times when I read, but those times are a point in my life." A few weeks earlier (May 4) he wrote to his cousin Mirabeau, who was to be the father of the orator and who fancied himself as a writer as indeed he fancied himself in other respects: "I allow less than you to men of letters; I judge only by their works, for I confess that I don't know any; but I will tell you frankly that, a few great geniuses apart, and a few original men whose names I respect, the rest hardly impose on me."

The lack of reading cannot have been wholly a matter of time, though no doubt it was owing partly to lack of opportunity, for Vauvenargues had weak eyes and could not lay hands on a decent reader; he was, on his own confession, "obsessed by his own thoughts and passions." As to the latter, his miscellaneous and unspecified infirmities played a part: there was no relation between "his strength and his desires, his reason and his heart, his heart and his condition" (August 20, 1739). "I hate gaming like the fever, and dealings with women more than I dare say; those who could touch me would not even cast a look in my direction." If he was not a man of letters, neither was he, it is clear, exactly a man of action.

On May 17, 1741, Vauvenargues was writing to Saint-Vincens from Metz. Vauvenargues's health was not good; he had been on a diet of milk, which he reports was not beneficial, and had been ordered a month off to take the waters at Plombières. The next we know of him is that his regiment was ordered out from Metz for what is said to have been the brilliant campaign, under Belle-Isle, that resulted in the taking of Prague at the end of November 1741. Here his friend Paul-Hippolyte-Emmanuel de Seytres, a cadet in the *régiment du roi* and not yet eighteen, died; the eulogy he wrote of the young man was, no doubt for personal reasons, a little work to which he attached great importance, though he spoke (May 13, 1743) of its failure to move people, which he attributed to its "passion fardée." Vauvenargues's letters are laconic on

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the subject of the campaign. Writing to Saint-Vincens on March 14, 1742, he says: "I won't say what we have been doing [before arriving in Prague]; you will have known, if you wanted to. To speak naturally, we did no good; the campaign was hard, because of the winter." Vauvenargues indeed seems to have suffered from frostbite from which he never fully recovered.

Such military success as the campaign represented did not last; there was a change in political fortunes, and the French army was cut off in Prague. They broke out in the nights of December 16 and 17, 1742, and reached Eger on December 26. This retreat, like the original advance, was a highly skillful operation. On January 31, 1743, Vauvenargues is able to report from Naaburg in Bavaria: "We have orders to leave here on 4th; it is hoped that we shall be in France in the month of March; that is an agreeable prospect for this army, which has suffered a great deal and has need of a rest. The Rhine will not see it as flourishing as when we crossed before; we are leaving comrades behind us, I dare not say friends; we must put aside sad memories of this kind and fill ourselves as far as may be with the thought of those who remain." It is the voice of sober experience.

Vauvenargues was now a captain and apparently with no chance of advancement, for which influence as well as merit seems to have been required. He was merely a seasoned officer, so to speak, from the Provençal outback. He was nearly twenty-eight and had served for eight years. He must have begun to think, on the march back, of a different course of life. We find him at Nancy on April 4, 1743, making a bid for the attention of Voltaire, the supremely successful man of letters of his day as he was himself the classic non-starter; that can hardly be a misconstruction of the letter he sent to Voltaire on that date, though its ostensible object was to settle a dispute as to the respective merits of Corneille and Racine, Vauvenargues plumping unhesitatingly for the latter.

Four days later Vauvenargues submitted what was in effect his resignation from the army—a formal request for transfer to the foreign service with a covering letter to his commanding officer, the duc de Biron. These communications show a more ingenuous frankness than is advisable in those who want to get on in the world. The formal letter to the king says: "I have served for eight years, in France, in subaltern military employments, without promise and without hope." To Biron he begins, significantly, by saying: "Sir, I believe you do not think I have much ambition." Four days later he writes to Biron again with the afterthought that he should have enclosed a letter for the minister of foreign affairs. There is no sign of a reply to any of these letters.

Meanwhile Voltaire, on the subject at issue, at once congratulates him on his perspicuousness and puts in a good word for Corneille. Vauvenargues is no more disposed to conceal his feelings from Voltaire than from Biron. His next letter (July 22, 1743) begins: "I am in despair that you force me to respect Corneille" and points out some shoddiness in Voltaire's judgment, but sends him some further pieces. The old rascal thanks him briefly, saying that he is more astonished than before that Vauvenargues should be engaged in a profession "very noble in truth, but a little barbarous, and as unsuitable for ordinary men as for men of intelligence" ("hommes d'esprit"). We are at the beginning of the epoch, of which Voltaire as much as anybody was the prophet, in which writers were to give themselves airs of superiority over those who do the sordid work of the world.

The business of leaving the army could not decently be pursued at this point, for the regiment was again ordered out, this time to the Rhineland, and Vauvenargues was present at the battle of Dettingen. Once again he is laconic in his references to this affair; he confirms that the French "fought like madmen"; "that is literally true," he says a month after the defeat, though one does not know with exactly what emphasis. It was in January 1744 that he wrote to Biron and formally resigned his commission. Biron had ignored his earlier approaches, and he says bitterly: "If you, sir, to whom I have the honour of being known, treat me in this way, what am I to expect of those who do not know me?" This time an acknowledgement came in a flash, accepting the resignation and saying nothing else. It was uncivil treatment indeed for a sick officer who had given the service Vauvenargues had. The minister for foreign affairs had better manners, but for one reason or another, nothing came of that approach

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either. Vauvenargues was at the end of his tether.

He finally settled in Paris. How far the association with Voltaire was decisive in this matter it is hard to say. Certainly the great man was delighted that Vauvenargues had left the army, which, he said to his correspondent, "demands a more robust body than yours, and a mind not given to philosophy." With a somewhat coarse blandness he invites the young man "to employ the rest of his life in making himself happy." That was on April 3, 1745. The association with Voltaire was, anyhow, undoubtedly a source of reassurance, but there is no trace of Vauvenargues giving up his independence of mind to Voltaire or to anyone else. There is an exchange of letters in January 1745 in which Voltaire lets slip some typically careless and slightly condescending words about La Fontaine, and he is promptly put in his place by Vauvenargues, who, for all that he did not pretend to understand poetry—he says he had learned all he knew about it from Voltaire, make of that what you will—and perhaps because he rightly thought poorly of the poetry of his day, knew how to value the instinctive genius of "the man who thinks everywhere, in his *Contes,* in his *Préfaces,* in his *Fables.*" It was nonetheless through Voltaire showing around one of the pieces Vauvenargues sent him that the ex-soldier first appeared in print, in a periodical. His one book, containing some of the *Maximes* and *L'introduction à la connaissance de l'esprit humain,* appeared anonymously in Paris in 1746. There is, in the Méjanes library at Aix, a copy that bears not only Vauvenargues's corrections but critical notes by Voltaire, who must have read them with care. The second edition, which appeared after the death of Vauvenargues, was prepared by the author himself, who had taken account of Voltaire's comments and had suppressed some two hundred *pensées.*

What exactly the personal relations between Voltaire and Vauvenargues were it is hard to say. The prestige of an immense reputation, to someone completely outside the literary system of the time, certainly had its effect, as well as Voltaire's dazzling literary performance, which glitters even after two hundred years, during which publicists, admittedly of diminishing quality, have increasingly taken public attention away from mere sober operators. These things might well, however, have awed him more than they did, to judge from his critical responses in the correspondence. There are of course huge expressions of regard, on Voltaire's side, but there are also suggestions that the great man was making a not altogether convincing attempt to show himself as a friend of the sort of sincerity he must have recognized in Vauvenargues. "I have called," Voltaire says in February 1746—and presumably he means without having seen the object of his visit—"several times to thank you for having given the public thoughts which are above it." "What! Sickness stops me going to see the most amiable of men, and does not stop me going to Versailles! I blush and bemoan this cruel contradiction." Yet, so far as one can read through Voltaire's habitual egotism and insincerity, he did in fact recognize Vauvenargues as someone different from the crowd of clever writers who swarmed in Paris. His last surviving letter to Vauvenargues, written in May 1746, and so just a year before the latter's death, is as follows: "I am going to read your portraits! If ever I want to make that of the most natural genius, the man of greatest taste, the loftiest and simplest soul, I would put your name underneath. *Je vous embrasse tendrement.*"

Our further glimpses of Vauvenargues, after that date, are only in nine letters to his friend Saint-Vincens, by then a legal functionary in Aix. There is a complete lack of pretence in these communications. When Saint-Vincens's mother dies: "I do not doubt that your affliction is great: the least dear connections in life are regretted, when they break. The charms of society are all founded on its ties; we often feel nothing but the weight of our chains, when we wear them; but, as soon as they are broken, we bend under the heaviness of our own weakness, which they support." Of himself (August 23, 1746): "For a long time I have done nothing, or very little." He is roused by the news that Provence has been invaded by the Piedmontese with the imperial forces, as he had foreseen (November 24, 1746): "The whole of Provence is in arms, and here am I calmly beside my fire; the bad state of my eyes and of my health do not justify me sufficiently, and I should be there with all the other gentlemen of the province. Let me know, please, at once, if there is still any post

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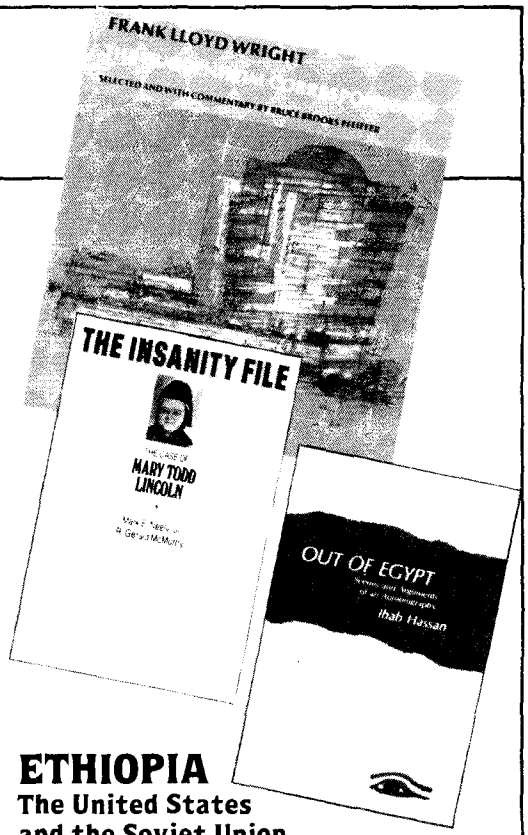

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in our troops, recently raised, and if I should be sure of being used, if I came to Provence." He was almost certainly in no condition for such an expedition. He watches events with a professional eye; he could not be further from the denunciations of the bleating publicist (December 27, 1746): "Many people here blame the conduct of the Marshal of Belle-Isle; but it is difficult to judge, when one is not on the spot, and when one hasn't exact knowledge of the terrain, the troops, supplies, the real strength of the enemy and that of positions and indeed of the plans in general." By February 11, 1747: "I do not flatter myself that I shall be going out very soon, because there is no change in my frost-bite; the wound is still the same, and the bone much swollen. The lack of exercise is having its effect on my health; I do not digest, I am full of humours which are getting on my chest and irritate my cough: I tell you about all these trifles because I know you care about me." A month later (March 10, 1747): "I have been confined to my room for two and a half months, with infirmities which this too sedentary life does nothing to relieve." Another two and a half months and he was dead—on May 28, 1747.

Vauvenargues is one of those writers, like George Herbert, whose life—and indeed death—cannot be satisfactorily separated from their works. It was some years before Sainte-Beuve had become acquainted with Vauvenargues's correspondence—which is all there is to take us beyond the bare facts of his life to the actual texture of it—that he wrote his famous opening sentence: "Let us get back with Vauvenargues to purity of language, serenity of thought and moral integrity": that was the impression gathered from the work that had been published up to 1850 and from the comments in particular of Suard, who published an edition with a short study that claimed to owe something to people who had known the author. It is already an impression of the man as well as of the writings, and the writings point, all the time, to the man. I find Sainte-Beuve's later essays—of 1857, by which time he had seen the correspondence—less illuminating than might have been expected. It seems to me that he overvalues the correspondence with Mirabeau and undervalues that with Saint-Vincens; it may also be that, as the classic man of letters himself, he can hardly forgive or perhaps quite believe in Vauvenargues's addiction to the ordinary duties of his station. Yet the primacy of action, in the life of this young man not more than moderately well equipped for it, is perfectly real; and it is, moreover, perfectly compatible with the more laconic and more valuable part of his works, the *Réflexions et Maximes* themselves.

If life as an officer in the *Régiment du roi* could not be reconciled with a literary life, in the manner of Voltaire or of Sainte-Beuve himself, it contained endless fag-ends of leisure—even perhaps great stretches of it—in inconvenient places and in non-literary company, and the *matter* of the reflections is largely determined by the author's mode of life. He was, after all, concerned with what he had seen of people's behavior, including his own, rather than with the making of books, and this is a fault on the right side none too common among the writers of any century. There are plenty of moralists to illustrate the advantages of a less sketchy formal education than Vauvenargues received and of sitting surrounded by libraries and clever people. What Vauvenargues illustrates is what a man of acute observation, and an acute sense of what mattered to him in literature and what did not, could make of the life and ideas of his time.

No one could be further from the superficial systematizers of the eighteenth century than Vauvenargues. A kind of loose system can be made out of his ideas; his work, as J.-Roger Charbonnel says in his excellent edition of the *Réflexions et Maximes* (1934), asserts "the primacy of feeling, in so far as it gives a sketch of moral pragmatism." But too much should not be made even of this. Vauvenargues stands at a point of tension between the world of Voltaire and the world of Rousseau, in not more than partial sympathy with either. If he draws on the current rationalism, on the religious attitudes of the preceding century, or on a classical stoicism, it is only so far: and the "so far" is determined by his being the sort of man he is, in the circumstances in which he happens to find himself. He is not a great thinker who breaks the molds of thought, and those who put theory before practice will not stay with him for very long. He is in the current of ideas as he is in the current of events and actions, and he has to make of them what he can while continuing to do what

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he must. It is his life that gives shape to his thoughts, and it is the coherence of his life rather than of his logic that gives the *Réflexions et Maximes* their absorbing interest.

A profound and vulnerable diffidence marks the thought of Vauvenargues as it marks his life. "Few ideas are true in every respect," he says, and he does not seek to except his own. "People don't say much that is sensible when they are trying to be unusual." "It is easier to say new things than to reconcile those which have been said already." What interests the author of the *Maximes* is not his own fancies but the nature of the human mind in general—not the grand theoretical constructions of systematic philosophers but the individual mind picking its way through the world by a series of intuitions. "The human mind is penetrating rather than consequential and picks up more than it can put together."

There may be a touch of Descartes in the value Vauvenargues attaches to clear and distinct ideas, but his sense of the importance of clarity of expression is as much that of a poet as of a philosopher. "When a thought is too weak to bear being expressed simply, better abandon it." "Profound thought needs no dress but clarity." "Where error rules there is obscurity." "Errors would disappear if they were stated clearly." Yet that is not meant to suggest that ideas are self-proving; rather that they are of such a nature that they can continually be checked against the real world.

Vauvenargues has a poor view of the merely learned mind. "In all ages there have been men who knew a lot and had very mediocre minds; on the other hand, extremely capacious minds which knew very little. Ignorance is not lack of intelligence, nor is knowledge proof of genius." "A man who has a poor digestion but is voracious, is perhaps a pretty good likeness of the intellectual character of most learned people." It is not self-evident that people at large should be encouraged to think. "Great men, by teaching the weak to think, have put them on the road to error." "It is not true that equality is a law of nature. Nature has made nothing equal. Its sovereign law is subordination and dependence." "It never happens that literature and a spirit of criticism become widely diffused in a nation without philosophy and the arts showing the same symptoms which are to be observed in popular governments, where every sort of childishness and fantasy puts in an appearance and finds people who are in favour of them." "The first sigh of childhood is for liberty," but "Liberty is incompatible with weakness," and weakness is the ordinary condition of mankind. "As between kings, between peoples, between private persons, the strongest assumes rights over the weakest, and the same rule is followed by animals and by inanimate objects: so that everything in the universe happens by violence; and this order, which with some show of justice we disapprove of, is the most general, the most unchangeable and the most important law of nature."

It is for this harsh world that the morality of Vauvenargues is designed; or rather, it is in a world so perceived that he has come to see the necessity of it. "The man who can stand anything can dare anything." There is nothing of the triumphant superman about this assertion; it is the ordinary lot of man that is being described. Vauvenargues accepts it for himself, and his contempt is reserved for the clever talkers who do not. "The contemplator, lying luxuriously in a carpeted room, declaims against the soldier who passes winter nights beside a river and, with his weapons, watches in silence over the safety of his country." "Vice foments war: virtue fights it." "It is not with taking hunger and misery among foreigners that a hero associates glory, but with suffering for the State; it is not with killing but with facing death." "We have so little virtue that we think ourselves ridiculous if we love glory."

Vauvenargues thought that he should run the risk of this ridicule, and the glory he sought was not success. "How much in the way of disgust and trouble could one not spare oneself if one had the courage to seek glory through merit alone"—and he knew that merit alone was unlikely to go very far in the world that surrounded him. Yet it is not renunciation that is at the center of his morality. Under all this there is a final vivacity. "The thought of death deceives us; for it makes us forget to live." Living does not mean a life of indulgence: "The falsest of all philosophies is the one which, on the pretext of freeing men from the troubles of the passions, counsels idleness, surrender and forgetfulness of themselves." "If all our foresight cannot make our

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life happy, how much less can our carelessness?" On the other hand: "One shouldn't believe that what nature has made attractive is vicious. There is no century in which people have not invented imaginary virtues and vices." There is a natural generosity in this view of things: "Magnanimity does not have to answer to prudence for its motives." "No-one gets things wrong more often than those who act only on reflection." "Few great things are done by deliberation." In this last reflection the intuition of the writer who asserts that "one has to see at a glance the real proof of one's argument" joins the final recklessness of the man of action who knows that "to achieve great things it is necessary to live as if you were never going to die." For Vauvenargues the two worlds were not separate.

Slammer

THE JAIL: MANAGING THE UNDERCLASS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. *By John Irwin. University of California Press. $16.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES Q. WILSON

Legally, jails differ from prisons in that the former are locally (city or county) managed institutions intended to house people who have been detained while awaiting bail, arraignment, or trial, or who have been sentenced to relatively short terms of confinement (usually less than one year). Prisons, by contrast, are state-run institutions intended to hold sentenced felons. John Irwin, who once served a five-year term in Soledad State Prison in California and who now is a professor of sociology at San Francisco State University, published in 1980 a book on prisons. In this new book he turns his attention to jails.

His central finding is that jails, whatever their legal definition or ostensible purpose, in fact receive and confine "mostly detached and disreputable persons who are arrested more because they are offensive than because they have committed crimes." Because society uses jails for the management of "rabble" (Irwin's term, not mine), it inadvertently increases their number and worsens their lot.

About half of the people in jails are there serving sentences, some because their offenses are minor but others because the prisons to which they would otherwise be sent are overcrowded. Irwin's study, however, is mostly based on observations about people not serving sentences—people who are arrested and detained, but (usually) not held for very long. His major source of data is a random sample of people admitted to the San Francisco city and county jails—one hundred arrested for felonies and one hundred arrested for misdemeanors. Because the alleged misdemeanants were in jail so briefly (often, no more than a few hours), Irwin and his assistants were not able to interview them. Most had been picked up for public order offenses, such as public drunkenness or drunk driving, traffic violations, or the like. Since his book is about the "rabble," it is odd that it has so little to say, systematically, about people arrested specifically because they were "offensive." But as it turns out, at least in his judgment, most of the persons arrested on felony charges had not committed very serious crimes either, and so they can be taken as representative of the rabble.

The most common felony charge involved a narcotics violation (about a third of the total) or some kind of theft (about half the total). But most of these charges, in fact, did not involve serious behavior so much as they involved highly offensive behavior to which a serious charge was appended. For example, an unemployed black man who had been smoking marijuana was arrested for possession with intent to sell. A Mexican-American who was arrested for theft had apparently been using a wire to work coins loose from a vending machine. A young black man was arrested for assault after getting into a fight with a pimp as a consequence of an argument with the latter's prostitute. By Irwin's count, roughly three-fourths of the "felons" were arrested because they had been making a nuisance of themselves, about a quarter because they had probably committed a fairly serious crime.

The bulk of the book is devoted to accounts of the way jail disorients and degrades those housed in it, separating them from work and

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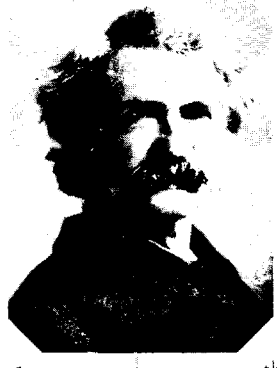

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– Benjamin DeMott, *The Atlantic*

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family and leaving them ill-prepared for a useful social life. Jail is portrayed as an institution that is more punishing than prison, because jail, intended for brief detentions, lacks private cells (and thus there is more inmate brutality and coerced sexuality), lacks any semblance of amenity or service or much open space for recreation, and is run by guards who practice "malign neglect." There being few other accounts of jail life, it is impossible to know whether Irwin's account is generally accurate.

Let us suppose, however, that it is. Jail is an unpleasant place. Its inmates are, in some sense, rabble. They are there because they have been offensive in public places. Only a few stay very long. In most of the cases on which the author reports, they were released in a matter of hours or at most a few days. Nevertheless, even a few hours in a drunk tank or a few days in a crowded cell is hardly a day at the beach. What of it?

One possible implication is that society should devote more care and effort to managing jails for the simple reason that a majority of the inmates have not been convicted of any crime and, thus, should not be exposed to punishment. We know that there are well-run and poorly run prisons; cannot there also be well-run or poorly run jails? Perhaps the author has some ideas on how to improve matters. No. Irwin has almost nothing to say about management. One gets the impression that he believes that all jails will inevitably be badly run.

Another possible implication is that we should get people out of jail as quickly as we can, provided we can be reasonably certain that they will appear for their trial and pose no risk to society. There are, of course, countless programs all over the country designed to facilitate the early release on their own recognizance of people meeting these criteria. Irwin himself apparently worked in such a program in San Francisco. But, except in passing, there is no discussion of pre-trial release.

Instead, the lesson that Irwin draws from this study is that society is wrong to use jail to control, even temporarily, offensive behavior. "We should learn to tolerate a large number of rabble." To do this, it is necessary to "alter our basic values." The ones that need changing are our "individualistic cultural values that promote estrangement." We can also reduce the number of rabble by reducing "structural unemployment." In the meantime, we should decriminalize the public behaviors that lead to jailings and divert those who might still be jailed to other (unspecified) programs. The police should be instructed to worry about serious crime, which is, of course, white-collar and corporate crime.

Not a shred of evidence is offered for any of these propositions. Does "individualism" or "structural unemployment" cause the rabble to become more numerous? Charles Murray thinks it is collectivism (i.e., the welfare state) that causes the increase. The Moral Majority thinks it is the breakdown of old-fashioned values (exactly the ones that Irwin is no doubt delighted to see broken down). Some police think the rabble grows because the public-order statutes are not enforced vigorously enough, thus making street life too attractive. Some economists believe that there is structural unemployment; others deny it. Is there any way to choose among these explanations? If there is, Irwin does not help us find it.

More important than the author's dubious explanations for the existence of rabble is his argument about the nature of society and its right to take collective action to assure that in public places there is a reasonable level of decorum. Irwin seems to attach no value to that claim. He maintains that if someone is worried or frightened by the sight of people drinking or urinating on the streets, sleeping on the benches of public parks, gathering in gangs on street corners, or dealing drugs near the supermarket, then the fault lies in the "values" of the beholder. His or her values should change.

Irwin, convinced that corporate crime is the greatest threat, offers no explanation for why people seem to fear disreputable behavior in public places. Is it false consciousness? Or is it instead an expression of a deep concern for the quality of communal life and thus a deep commitment to the importance of community? Take an example described in the words of a man in Irwin's jail sample:

> I was sitting on the steps at Walgreen's on Polk Street [a neighborhood the police wanted to clean up] drinking a vodka. The police came up to me and told me to pour it out. Then they searched me and found some grass on me. It was less than an ounce. They arrested me for possession for sale.

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What should the police have done? Not tell the man that he may not drink in public on the steps of a drugstore that was presumably patronized by many people? We don't know what led to the search. Since the man was fined one hundred dollars, we know the judge must have believed it was a proper search, but of course it may not have been. But suppose there had been no search or, if a search, no marijuana. And suppose the man had refused to stop drinking in public. Should the police have done nothing? If they did something, should it have been an arrest, or removal to a detoxification center, or a trip home? Different people will prefer different destinations, but almost anything the police do, including mere admonition, involves an assertion of authority backed by the real or implied threat of compulsion. My sense is that people want the police to assert this authority and enforce it where necessary. The police were watchmen and peacekeepers long before they were crook-catchers, and their task of order maintenance remains one of their most important functions.

Irwin does not even address these issues, much less resolve them. Apparently, his only advice to the customers of Walgreen's is to step around the drunk, look the other way, and think hard about the evils of corporate crime. I do not believe these are easy issues, but I do know that the great majority of Americans feel strongly about them and differently from Irwin.

As far as I can tell, Irwin has two rejoinders to the public's concern: First, if the police enforce order, they are liable to do so on the basis of whim and prejudice, tinged with corruption. Such improper behavior is a risk in order maintenance, but it is also a risk in law enforcement, even law enforcement aimed at white-collar crime. (Indeed, it is perhaps a greater risk: there is more to gain—in shakedowns and bribes—from police investigations of politicians and business people than from arresting a drunk or a rowdy juvenile.) Nonetheless, there is a problem. But it is a problem inherent in the exercise of discretionary authority and must be addressed directly, not indirectly by subordinating all other goals to that of minimizing caprice.

Second, Irwin suggests that our very definition of *rabble* is arbitrary and reflective of class bias. Our labeling of some behavior as offensive reflects, he suggests, our tendency to infer character from behavior. That is quite correct and is the reason his example of the "arbitrary" nature of the inference proves the very opposite of what he implies. The police, he notes, ignore theatergoers who spill out onto the sidewalk during intermission while clutching drinks in their hands, but crack down on derelicts who drink openly on the sidewalk. He seems to find that troublesome. I don't. The police, like most people, can readily distinguish the character of a theatergoer from the character of a skid-row derelict. The sight of Professor Irwin and his wife sipping a glass of white wine suggests decent, middle-class persons respectful of the rights, privacy, and property of others, near whom one can safely venture without fear of being rudely accosted. The sight of a shabby, foul-smelling drunk drinking wine from a bottle hidden in a paper bag suggests a person who is likely to behave unpredictably and probably offensively and who may launch a verbal or physical attack. Mistakes will be made, of course, but not many. What we have here are empirical generalizations—predictions—about character, which have been supported by a great deal of experience.

To act as if these cues were unimportant or to say that we should learn to accept what our senses warn us to be wary of is to be blind to the social nature of human life. To say that we may attend to these cues but not in a way that involves legal compulsion is to express a faith in the natural equilibrium of social life that is wholly unwarranted.

History's Fermi

RENAISSANCE ESSAYS. *By Hugh Trevor-Roper. University of Chicago Press. $22.50.*

Reviewed by GEOFFREY PARKER

"Trevor-Roper's essays have an enduring place in European history" is the extravagant claim advanced by Professor Mark A. Kishlansky, of the University of Chicago, on the dust jacket of this book. "They command

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our attention equally as revealing interpretations of the past and as examples of history writing at its best." And this is no idle puff: the historical essay is a valuable, distinctive art form, and Trevor-Roper is its undisputed master. Many of his major contributions to early modern history have been made in the form of essays rather than books: the "seventeenth-century General Crisis," the "European witchcraze," the "rise of the gentry" in Tudor and Stuart England—all of them concepts that subsequently entered the mainstream of historical debate. Why?

Perhaps a scientific parallel offers a clue. It is said that, during the development of nuclear fission at the University of Chicago in the early 1940s, the research team ran into a serious problem that held up their entire project. So the great physicist Enrico Fermi was sent for. With the aid only of his slide rule and a few readings, within a few hours he suggested a solution that would allow the work to continue. His solution proved to be correct. Admittedly, in time, the Chicago researchers would have arrived at that answer themselves; but Fermi's superior experience and insight saved them months of expensive experiment. Trevor-Roper's essays have played much the same role in the writing of early modern history. They have suggested, on the basis of well-chosen readings and a wide experience of human affairs, the solutions to seemingly intractable historical problems.

Moreover, the topics he tackled have not been chosen at random—on the contrary, they possessed a curious consistency. It is not the unity of Time, for as much of his work has been concentrated in the twentieth as in the seventeenth century; nor is it Place, for he has always ranged freely over England, Scotland, and Europe (east as well as west). But there has usually been a recurring theme. Trevor-Roper seems to have acquired a particular fascination with men who, in a misguided quest for total success, brought about their own destruction. His first book was a classic biography of Charles I's unsuccessful primate, *Archbishop Laud;* his second book was a detailed biographical study, *The Last Days of Hitler.* Then came biographies of the crooked sinologist, Sir Edward Backhouse (*The Hermit of Peking*), and of that cultivated but unattractive spy, Kim Philby. In Trevor-Roper's essays, other heroic failures have been meticulously charted: apart from the witches, who also (to some extent) brought destruction upon themselves, there are studies of the promising but doomed English Republic of the 1650s, and of such unsuccessful figures as Cyril Lukaris, patriarch of Constantinople in the 1630s, who tried to modernize the ritual and liturgy of the Greek Orthodox church and was eventually drowned in the Sea of Marmara by his Turkish masters. The volume under review contains a further installment of great failures. Here we may read of Doge Francesco Foscari of Venice, forced to abdicate by his enemies in 1457 (after a reign lasting thirty-four years) when they managed (at the third attempt) to have his son convicted of treason; of Sir Thomas More, who "shrank" from being an intellectual of international renown, before the Reformation, into a provincial saint, cultivated only in a dwindling family circle afterwards; and of Lord Lisle, the illegitimate son of King Edward IV, who survived under the Tudors to become governor of Calais during the 1530s, but was eventually imprisoned by Henry VIII and died the day after he was pardoned "through too much rejoicing."

The thirteen essays printed here include two that are in fact long book reviews (of *The Lisle Letters* and *The Correspondence of Erasmus*); and four that were initially given as lectures (on the historians John Stow and William Camden, on Richard Hooker, and on the culture of Baroque courts). The rest were originally written as essays and include three—one on the Paracelsian movement, one on Sir Thomas More, and one on Robert Burton (author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*)—that are new in their present form. The others have appeared before (albeit in scattered places): on Doge Foscari, on the Emperor Maximilian (another great failure) as patron of the arts, on the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, and on two men with the same name whom most historians have rolled into one (the "sieur de la Rivière"—one of them the personal doctor of Henry IV of France, who died in 1605, the other a Paracelsian quack, who died in 1598).

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pia, Trevor-Roper stresses the role of slavery in More's ideal community: every household had two slaves, he notes, and there were others to clean the streets, butcher animals, and perform further unpleasant but necessary tasks. The slaves included those Utopians who disagreed with the regime, for, according to More, political prisoners were considered "deserving of greater punishment because, after being so godly brought up to virtue in so excellent a commonwealth, they could not for all that be restrained from misdoing." Trevor-Roper comments with heavy irony: "A grim collectivist tyranny, we may say; but no: there is light somewhere. Provided he conforms in the essentials of public doctrine, and keeps out of politics, and obeys all the rules, and does not hanker after the wrong kinds of pleasure, or think too much, a Utopian can have a jolly life." He is similarly scathing about Erasmus, making fun of his hypochondria, stressing his unappetizing desire always to win arguments, drawing attention to his intense dislike of Jews. Trevor-Roper sheds new light on everything he studies: his writings may often be irreverent, but they are always illuminating.

However, republishing work originally written in other circumstances forces an author to make a difficult decision. Should he reprint the text as it stands, warts and all, regardless of the passage of time; or should he use the opportunity to correct errors, strengthen arguments, and clear up misconceptions in the light of subsequent research (whether by himself or by others)? In the past, Trevor-Roper has nailed his colors firmly and unequivocally to the former mast. When *The Last Days of Hitler* was republished in 1956, nine years after its original appearance, he wrote:

> No doubt there are additions which I might make here or there; but since there are no substantial errors to correct or significant omissions to repair, I have decided to follow the wise example of Pontius Pilate and say, what I have written I have written. I have considered that any book which is worth reprinting at all can afford to carry the evidence of its date.

In fact, on this occasion, a few extra footnotes were added and a new introduction was supplied. But when a further edition was issued in 1962, the text had become a tablet of stone: "In the six years since the last edition of this book was published . . . nothing has happened to cause me to alter a word I have written. It is difficult even to add a word." So there.

But what of the present work, which includes two items from 1961–62 and two more from 1971–72? In the brief preface, Trevor-Roper thanks his publishers and friends "who have encouraged me to reprint, and thus forced me to revise" the essays. But actual evidence of revision is very slight. The essay on Sir Thomas More (written in 1978–79), although heavily footnoted (and, indeed, endnoted as well), contains no explicit reference to the more recent work of Quentin Skinner or Brendan Bradshaw. The lecture about William Camden (written in 1971) still gives thanks for a reference to "Mr Alfred Soman of Carleton College, Minnesota," although Dr. Soman in fact left the United States for the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris a decade ago. More surprisingly, the long analysis "The Outbreak of the Thirty Years' War" (which first appeared in the magazine *Horizon* in 1962) appears to have been reprinted verbatim, in spite of the subsequent studies on the subject by John Elliott, Peter Brightwell, F. H. Schubert, Josef Polišenský, J. J. Poelhekke, C. H. Carter, and Jonathan Israel. Has their research, then, in the archives of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Spain, and the Low Countries changed nothing?

Curiously, this is precisely the case: almost all of the labor by these scholars has served merely to confirm the intuitive deductions of Trevor-Roper. The revolt of Bohemia in 1618 did *not* inevitably mean the outbreak of a general European war: that only began in 1621, and even then it "was caused not by accumulated accidents, but by human decisions." Peace could easily have been preserved. "Perhaps," Trevor-Roper continues, "no general war ever arises out of mere incidents. General wars arise because the governments of great powers, or the men behind such governments, choose war, and exploit incidents." He proceeds then to identify a group of Spanish statesmen—the count-duke of Olivares, the count of Oñate, Don Balthasar de Zúñiga, and others—as the men who wanted a great war in 1621 because they believed they could win it, whereas they felt they were losing the peace. Few scholars

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today would disagree with this analysis. Recent research has clarified the stages by which Spain's leaders reached their decision; the research has not called Trevor-Roper's account into question. Indeed, to some extent, their work may be said to have taken his perceptive analysis written in 1962 as their point of departure.

In this, therefore, as in so many other areas of historical confusion and contradiction, Trevor-Roper's essays have played the part of Enrico Fermi's slide rule. It is good to have the original version of such material reprinted in an unretouched form, for not only does it continue to illuminate the past, it also reveals some of the processes by which historians seek to interpret and explain that past.

Washington Defeats Rome

THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC EXPERIENCE: A HISTORY FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT. *By Jay P. Dolan. Doubleday. $19.95.*

Reviewed by PAUL J. DOLAN

The climactic moment in American Catholicism came on Monday, September 12, 1960, when John Kennedy said to the Ministerial Association of Greater Houston and a nationwide audience: "I do not accept the right of any ecclesiastical official to tell me what to do in the sphere of my public responsibility as an elected official." He may not have reassured the Protestants, but he certainly liberated the Catholics.

In effect, this son of wealth and Harvard said that you can be like me: pragmatic, nonideological, willing to do anything to succeed, quick-witted, and able to put down and take up convictions. You can be very American and a little Catholic too. On more and more issues, more and more Catholics, lay and clerical, have been doing just that ever since.

Jay P. Dolan, the director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at Notre Dame, knows that the history of Catholicism in America was the struggle of titans, as the sports pages might say, and that Washington beat Rome when Kennedy completed that long pass. At least I think he knows it, but he systematically avoids dealing with it in *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present.*

Published by Doubleday, the semi-official "Catholic house" among commercial publishers, the book claims to be a "social history." Dolan writes: "My main concern . . . was to focus . . . on the people and not just the prelates . . . and write what I believe is a new history of Roman Catholicism in the United States." Alas, he comes nowhere near his stated intention. It is too bad he never considered the question posed by Lenny Bruce: "How come only the Catholic Church is THE church?"

Dolan's first chapter, a survey of the Spanish and French explorations and missions in North America (mostly Mexico and Canada), is a disaster. I once heard a professor of history in a Catholic college, a religious of Irish descent, argue vehemently that the essential American institutions were those that stemmed from the Spanish and French Catholic settlements and not from those of the Protestant English. He did not understand when someone asked if he realized in what language he was arguing. Dolan avoids that pitfall by avoiding the question. He is clearly not interested in beginning his "new history" here. The chapter has the tired tone of a history handbook. He writes of the Indians in the Southwest: "Some lived in earthen mound homes, others in wooden plank houses or adobe dwellings. Many were skilled in weaving blankets, while others excelled at rock painting." And: "France certainly had its problems in the eighteenth century." But my favorite sentence is this description of Jacques Marquette: "He was a zealous missionary, typical of those fearless Jesuits who would chase a potential convert across streams, down rivers, and over mountains until they could catch their prey." Dolan likes the word *irenic*, but this is unmistakably history from the missionary position.

If the first chapter is a disaster, the second is an embarrassment. "Catholicism and Native American Cultures" is inauthentic, a chapter added because a "new history" must require something of this sort. An example:

PAUL J. DOLAN teaches at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and is the author of *Of War and War's Alarms*. He is not related to Jay P. Dolan.

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> The mission town also helped to protect the neophytes [recent Indian converts] from the scandalous behavior of the European settlers who lived in the region. . . .
>
> Segregating the Indians was good not only for their souls, but also for their minds. In such a controlled environment the Indians would be better able to assimilate the customs, language and skills of a European culture.

Dolan seems to see no conflict between the first and third sentences.

The real problem is that important connections are not made. While he is telling us that the Indians were forced to adopt a Spanish form of government, Dolan writes only that this involved "a tremendous change for the Indians." Dolan quotes a French Jesuit on the difficulty in making the Indians understand that marriage is indissoluble: "Of all the Christian laws which we propound to them, there is not one that seems so hard to them as that which forbids polygamy, and does not allow them to break the bonds of lawful marriage. . . . They no longer look upon Christian marriage as an aid and comfort of human life, but as a servitude full of vexation and bitterness. It is this that prevents most of the infidels from accepting the Faith and has caused some to lose it who had already embraced it." To this, Dolan adds (page 64): "Such incongruence between the Indian way of life and the Christian religion led many Indians to conclude that 'the missionary was an enigma, his doctrine a mystery, and his ethic a riddle.' " He writes of the contemporary church (page 436): "Another area that has undergone substantial revision is the church's attitude toward divorce. . . . Clergy and bishops are recognizing the reality of divorce among Catholics. . . . In 1967, the church in the United States granted seven hundred annulments; in 1978, twenty-five thousand annulments were issued." It seems the Indians were right.

Meanwhile, back at the old history, we've arrived at Jamestown and Plymouth and those English and Protestant colonies that became America. Or, at least, in one of them, Catholic Maryland, where: "Unlike in Massachusetts and Virginia, religious toleration was the law of the land." Despite the solecism, we are at last at the heart of the matter. Maryland was founded for and by Catholics, but was dependent on Protestant settlers to survive. Cecil Calvert, founder of Maryland, understood this. As Dolan says: "Since civil harmony was the primary consideration, religion was to remain a private affair." When the Jesuits demanded special privileges, Calvert turned them down. (The exchange between them sounds remarkably like that more recent one between Mario Cuomo and John Cardinal O'Connor.) Forced to be non-assertive by virtue of its minority position, the church was delighted to discover that it flourished by minding its own, strictly limited, business.

In chapters four and five Dolan writes about the church of John Carroll, first archbishop of Baltimore, as "Enlightenment Catholicism." If there can be such a thing as "jumbo shrimp," then there can be such a thing as "Enlightenment Catholicism"; it would mean an aristocratic, pragmatic, informed, and tolerant church, the one into which John Kennedy was baptized. It is in these chapters that Dolan offers a central thesis, but he never uses it to order his material. The essential question facing that handful of American Catholics at the end of the eighteenth century was whether the creation of this new nation required the creation of a new form of Catholicism appropriate to it. Even though he defined Gallicanism as "a situation in which the church in France tended to become very independent of the papacy," Dolan does have a grasp of the situation of the church at the "New Beginning":

> By 1815, two schools of thought were manifest in the American Catholic community. One desired to fashion an indigenous church, an American Catholicism; the other wanted to transplant to the new nation a continental European version of Roman Catholicism. These two positions constituted the opposing forces of an ongoing dialectic that would challenge Catholicism in the United States for decades to come.

Fr. Andrew Greeley used that thesis in *The Catholic Experience* in 1967 to tell a lively story of shoot-outs between the good guys, the Nativists in red hats, and the bad guys, the Romanists, also in red hats, but more of them. Dolan follows his thesis statement with "Immigrant Catholics: A Social Profile," a mind-numbing assemblage of statistics and truisms in which the "ongoing dialectic" is temporarily ignored while the reader is told, "The work experience of the Slovaks, Lithuanians,

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and Ukrainians closely resembled that of other immigrants from Eastern Europe"; and, "Of the 150 Czech Catholic parishes at this time [1920], 120 were in rural areas." That is one way to focus on the people and not the prelates.

Professor Dolan has written more specialized books on the immigrant church and Catholic revivalism, but this attempt at a comprehensive survey has no controlling idea and makes no attempt at synthesis, so its center is a series of chapters, all of which seem to be making the same point. Some good material gets buried in the announce-explain-give examples-summarize style of the core of the book. Missing is any extended consideration of the church in relation to other nineteenth-century American phenomena, such as the national political parties, the public school system, corporations, trade unions—those institutions in which people found a foothold and then security and then power. Dolan writes about the Catholic temperance movement but never even mentions the eighteenth amendment. By not dealing with the Nativist-Romanist split, Dolan loses the chance to place it in the larger context of the American experience, where it is the clash of natives and cosmopolitans, producing in literature, for example, Whitman and Twain (the Redskins) and James and Eliot (the Palefaces). By not giving a consistent sense of the American context of the Catholic experience, Dolan does not show the ways in which Catholicism and America met and mixed, making possible the simultaneous experience his title claims.

America is and always has been a mobile society. The European sense of Catholicism, symbolized by the centuries-old church in the town square, with its yellowed baptismal records, is of a church that is "established" in every sense of that word. What happened to that established church in this mobile society? If one can "light out for the Territory," can excommunication have the same meaning? Would an interdict have been treated like a tax on tea? In his final chapter, "A New Catholicism," Dolan assembles a great deal of material relevant to my questions, but he does not draw the obvious conclusions from it.

A dissenting clergyman once said, "The only way to change Canon Law is contrary practice." In the American church, where, as Dolan reports, 90 percent of the laity rejects

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the Pope's latest edict on birth control, that is what is happening. An American church is coming into being. There will be no formal theological or doctrinal statement; it will continue to "just grow." The American church will send money to Rome as to an aged parent. But to more and more of the pronouncements from that venerable city, more and more American Catholics will say: "I do not accept the right of any ecclesiastical official to tell me what to do." In a few years the history of the American Catholic experience will be rewritten and it will be interesting to see if the American Catholic Church is still "THE church."

Tan Tarzan of Thump

CHAMPION: JOE LOUIS, BLACK HERO IN WHITE AMERICA. *By Chris Mead. Scribner's. $18.95.*

Reviewed by ARTHUR KRYSTAL

On the night of June 22, 1937, in Chicago's Comiskey Park, a shy, inarticulate twenty-three-year-old black man knocked out James J. Braddock to become heavyweight champion of the world. Although not everyone had predicted the outcome, most people by then had heard of Joe Louis Barrow. From 1934, when he turned professional, to 1936, more had been written about Louis, estimated Damon Runyon, than about any living man, with the exception of Charles Lindbergh. Although Louis would always remain good copy, the significance of his early celebrity would pall during the sixties when black athletes and politicians were routinely making headlines. But in the thirties, intensive coverage of a black man was without precedent, and, according to Chris Mead, a young Yale historian, the media's representation of Joe Louis both reflected and altered the face of prejudice in American society.

Those born after 1940 won't remember Louis's preeminence in the ring or enormous popularity outside it. He reigned from 1937 to 1951, dominating his profession as no boxer has done before or since, becoming, in the process, one of the most recognizable men in America. The only other nationally known black man at the time was Father Divine, the entrepreneurial evangelist, whom the white press treated with thinly veiled contempt. There were notable blacks before Louis, of course: intellectuals like W. E. B. Du Bois and A. Philip Randolph; entertainers like Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Louis Armstrong, and Paul Robeson, who occasionally made the back pages of major newspapers; and there were athletes like Jessie Owens, whose magnificent performance during the 1936 Olympic Games caused more than a ripple of excitement on the sports pages. But by and large white people weren't interested in hearing about blacks.

Louis was the exception, in part because heavyweight boxers have always enjoyed a disproportionate fame but primarily because journalists fastened onto Louis and created a public demand for news about him. The inevitable irony is that Louis himself became something of a cipher, buried under sheets of newsprint. Nor was this really unintended. Louis's wily managers realized that in order for him to get a title fight, Louis had to be seen as an inoffensive, stereotypical Negro. In 1934, the public was not exactly clamoring for a black heavyweight. The memory of Arthur (Jack) Johnson, the first black man to hold the title (1908–15) under Marquis of Queensberry rules, still rankled in whites. Johnson had been a world beater, also a world baiter, strutting his stuff in and out of the ring: boozing, boasting, openly consorting with prostitutes, and even marrying a white woman. Blacks may have exulted when Johnson decked a white opponent, but they did so at their peril; at least eight blacks were killed in rioting after the Johnson-Jeffries fight in 1910.

Not every black fighter, however, automatically brought out the white sheets. A number of fine boxers, including Sam Mcvey, Joe Jeannette, Sam Langford (the "Boston Tar Baby"), and the great West Indian fighter Peter Jackson, whom John L. Sullivan assiduously ducked, fought in relative obscurity around the beginning of the century. Johnson fanned racial hatred not only because he was black but because he was boorish, someone in fact whom many blacks disliked, and while his victories gave them a secret frisson of satisfaction, his bumptiousness made it extremely difficult for black fighters who came

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after him. Of the forty-three men Louis fought before 1945, only one had been black.

Louis's first step to the championship was around the shadow cast by Johnson. His ambition was served by two factors: the scarcity of good heavyweights after Gene Tunney retired in 1928 and a shrewd public relations campaign centered around seven rules drawn up by his managers and approvingly run by the white press.

1. He was never to have his picture taken along with a white woman.
2. He was never to go to a nightclub alone.
3. There would be no soft fights.
4. There would be no fixed fights.
5. He was never to gloat over a fallen opponent.
6. He was to keep a "dead pan" in front of the camera.
7. He was to live and fight clean.

The official image of the well-behaved Negro stayed with Louis the rest of his life, despite certain misadventures. When he was coming up, whites were only too happy to see him as a good-natured darky who knew how to punch. The most fair-minded sportswriters regularly alluded to his color, and even those who genuinely liked him coined patronizing, alliterative epithets. Louis was the "Brown Bomber," of course, but he was also the "sepia slugger," "tan tornado," "sable cyclone," "dark dynamiter," "mocha mauler," "coffee-colored kayo king," and, my favorite, the "tan Tarzan of thump."

In many of the first press releases, Louis was the stereotyped distillation of his race: a hulking Negro who liked his jazz and fried chicken and who fought with a native—i.e., non-white—savagery. In the ring, he was the jungle killer who stalked his prey without mercy; outside of it, he wouldn't do a lick of work if he could help it. The liberal Paul Gallico of the *New York Daily News* reflected the unconscious, most insidious kind of prejudice when he described Louis as "a truly savage person, a man on whom civilization rested no more securely than a shawl thrown over one's shoulders." Racial misconceptions also extended to Louis's boxing skills. Bill Corum of the *New York Journal* voiced a typical sentiment before the second Schmeling fight: "There are certain gifts that the Negro race, as a race, and Louis, as an individual, have as a heritage. The ability carefully to work out a methodical plan and adhere to it, is not among them."

The truth is that Louis was the most methodical of fighters, who would, as A. J. Liebling might say, always interpret his opponents in interesting ways. Still, many reporters seemed oblivious to his conditioning and discipline in the ring. After the first Schmeling fight, even his jab became suspect to one boxing maven. Louis, of course, had the sweetest jab of any heavyweight until Muhammad Ali came along. As for his heralded savagery, it existed only in print. True brawlers, such as Henry Armstrong, Jack Dempsey, and Harry Greb, made Louis seem like a study in patience. Then again, not every observer let prejudice tamper with the evidence. Jonathan Mitchell of the *New Republic* wrote that Louis "reeks of study, practice, study. . . . He suggests a gorilla or a jungle lion as much as would an assistant professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology."

If Louis had only inspired contradictory accounts of his skills, based on racial bias, Chris Mead would have had the makings of an interesting monograph. But Louis was to become more than fodder for sportswriters. After his loss to the German champion Max Schmeling in 1936, he unwittingly stepped into the arena of international politics. Hitler, who had prudently taken no notice of the upcoming fight, now crowed over Schmeling's unassailable Aryan superiority. In short order, the Reich commissioned a film, "Max Schmeling's Victory, A German Victory," which played to full houses across Germany.

By the rematch two years later, chauvinistic hysteria, fueled by the growing hostility between the two nations, saturated the pre-fight publicity. Casting the gentlemanly Schmeling as the villain, the press presented Louis as a product of America's progressive social policies. With Germany a patently racist state, America was suddenly an open and tolerant society. And when Louis and Schmeling stepped into the ring in Yankee Stadium, democracy and fascism came out slugging at the bell. The fight was over in two minutes and four seconds, time enough for Louis to rewrite the role the media had cast him in.

Although some journalists continued to quote Louis in dialect, exaggerating his eating and sleeping habits, most came around to the

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idea that focusing on color was inappropriate in Louis's case. Not only had he bested the Nazi's champion and enlisted as soon as war broke out, but his natural reserve and quiet deportment won their respect. The postwar Joe Louis was not the instinctively brutal fighter of the thirties; instead he had become, in Jimmy Cannon's famous words, "a credit to his race—the human race." And as he got older and slower and his fights became progressively more difficult, the press sang his praises, acknowledging his courage as well as his fading skills.

It was during this period, 1939–51, argues Mead, that Louis induced a new awareness of race in America. Because many whites, urged on by the media, were exhorting Louis to beat all comers, black or white, they had to rethink long-held convictions about Negroes. Black observers, too, now came to regard Louis as a bellwether for racial progress. "Give [whites] the impression that Negro is a synonym for Joe Louis," wrote Theophilus Lewis in the *New York Amsterdam News*, "and race relations will change for the better."

A happy thought certainly, but did it fit the facts? How do we measure Louis's influence? I don't mean his influence in opening doors for blacks; Louis was probably the first black man to show both races that black advancement was inevitable. Without his example, the color line in baseball might not have been broken as early as 1947 and white reporters might have overstated Jackie Robinson's naturally aggressive, or non-white, style of baserunning, catlike agility, etc. But what about the torrents of abuse Robinson encountered from fans and players alike? Other black personalities fared no better. In 1951, Josephine Baker was denied service at New York's Stork Club, a favorite haunt of Joe Louis.

In fact, Louis was not synonymous with Negro in the minds of most whites. He was a good Negro, not a representative one. A white man could cheer for Louis while barring black children from segregated schools. Nevertheless, Mead contends that the sympathetic press coverage Louis received after the war must have had a beneficial effect on race relations. This is rather difficult to prove. What, after all, is the relation between the media's reporting of an event and the public's views on that event? Does the media speak for the majority of Americans, or is it, as the fundamentalists maintain, a minority liberal organ? Louis may have swayed some whites to reassess their feelings about Negroes, but surely prejudice runs too deep for any one individual to excavate it on his own.

Louis's real contribution may, indeed, be viewed in a different light entirely. If whites didn't accept blacks with more alacrity because of Louis, blacks accepted white authority with less and less equanimity. Even though liberals made it a point of honor to ignore Louis's race, blacks never forgot it. Louis was a black man beating white men at a game of strength, and to blacks Louis was always a black hero before he was an American hero. There is a further irony in this. As Mead reminds us, many middle-class blacks were ambivalent about the esteem in which Louis was held. Here was an uneducated Negro, viewed by whites as the paradigm of his race, who obviously would not be commanding such respect if he were a scientist or businessman. Such black newspapers as the *Chicago Defender* and the *New York Amsterdam News* even ran articles downplaying Louis's role as a model for blacks. Still, it had to be a curiously detached black person who wasn't thrilled when Louis won and who didn't weep when Marciano finally put him down in 1951.

As if to atone for all the bad press they had given Louis, journalists in the fifties and sixties fell over themselves trying to excuse Louis's burgeoning paranoia, cocaine habit, and tax problems. While Louis was an admirable man in many respects—generous, hard-working, modest—he was also irresponsible with money and people, his wife for one. Yes, Joe had an eye for the ladies, and color didn't count. But if reporters ever got wind of Louis's philandering ways, they kept quiet about it. No "brown boffer," "sepia swinger," or "tan tomcat" sprang out from headlines. And when Louis ended up as a greeter at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, the press decided that he had been dealt a bad hand by his country. Not so, says Mead. Louis liked being a greeter; he was comfortable with crowds and had come to expect their adulation. Also, he had always assumed he would be provided for. So the end of his career, much like the beginning, was a projection of the media's racial sensibilities.

I never saw Louis fight except on film, and I wasn't born until he was already a fixture in

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American life. I was too young really to appreciate the popularity that cut across lines of color and class, but Mead has convinced me. Louis's fabled "dignity," the word most often applied to him, is something not even A. J. Liebling was immune to, and Liebling had a built-in resistance to sham. Covering the second Sugar Ray Robinson-Randy Turpin fight in 1951, Liebling noted that when Louis, who was no longer champion, walked out on the field of the Polo Grounds, he received a bigger ovation than General MacArthur, who had preceded him. "Louis looks like a champion and carries himself like a champion, and people will continue to call him champion as long as he lives."

In fact, it is only a small exaggeration to say that Louis was champion before he was anything else, having no other identity in the public's mind. Consequently, Chris Mead's book is not meant as a biography but as a palimpsest of the public faces of Joe Louis, who at age twenty-three became a symbol of his race—a symbol whose subsequent metamorphosis would reflect both America's willingness and its incapacity to overcome a history of discrimination.

Although consistently illuminating in transcribing the prejudice that lay beneath the most "enlightened" print journalism of the past half century, *Champion* suffers on occasion from its author's zealousness. Banging away at Louis's carefully manicured public image, Mead finally had me reeling from the repetitions. He is best when commenting on the words of others; he is worst when attempting to recapitulate the history of sports or boxing. Here, his prose could do with some punching-up, as it were. But these excesses do not detract from his considerable achievement. He has tackled an interesting subject and done justice to it, telling us in the end more about ourselves than about a boxer by the name of Joe Louis.

When Joe Louis died on April 12, 1981, whites and blacks alike mourned, though I think their grief, too, had a different hue. How blacks felt, I would not want to say. For whites, Louis's death represented, I believe, a loss of innocence. He was the last black man of prominence whom whites felt they could manipulate. Whatever the media's intentions, manipulate him they did. As Mead makes so very clear, journalists monitored, distorted,

GRAHAM CHAINEY
A Literary History of Cambridge

At Cambridge Milton was whipped and Wordsworth got drunk; Tennyson met Arthur Hallam and Ted Hughes met Sylvia Plath; Macaulay was hit in the face with a dead cat and Henry James was nearly concussed by a punt pole. Nowhere in England outside London is richer in literary associations than Cambridge, yet this book is the first complete history of creative writers in the town and university.

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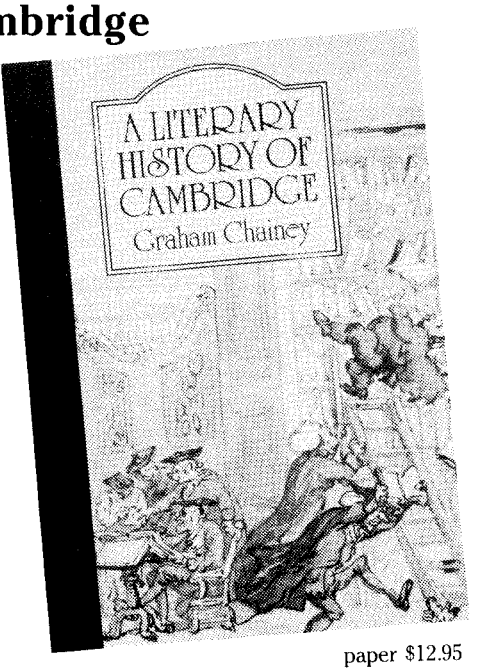

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and disseminated Joe Louis until he finally disappeared up America's sanctimonious vision of itself.

The Early Gospel

THE COMPLETE LETTERS OF SIGMUND FREUD TO WILHELM FLIESS: 1887–1904. *Translated and edited by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. Harvard University Press. $25.*

Reviewed by J. P. STERN

The 284 letters from Sigmund Freud to the Berlin otorhinolaryngologist Wilhelm Fliess contain the most intimate record we have of the beginnings of psychoanalysis. (Fliess's letters, alas, are lost.) An earlier volume, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse (The Origins of Psychoanalysis,* 1954), edited by Princess Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris, contained a selection of 168 letters, most of them incomplete. An attentive reading of the present book's preliminaries suggests that the words "translated and edited by J. M. Masson" on the title page must be taken with a pinch of salt. The transcription of the original German letters—always the hardest task—was done by Gerhard Fichtner, a historian of medicine at Tübingen; a draft translation was prepared by Lottie Newman, a confidante of the late Anna Freud; some of the letters were brought to Masson's attention by Peter Swales (an acknowledgment is made in a footnote on page 30); even the revision of the translation was not done by "the editor" alone but shared by his "research assistant," Marianne Loring. Mr. Masson, there is little reason to doubt, obtained many photocopies from various libraries, rummaged in Freud's desk in Hampstead to his heart's content, and talked with Anna Freud. As for the critical notes, we are not told how many Masson took over from Michael Schröter's German edition of these letters (published simultaneously); nor is it clear why Masson omitted so many of the excellent explanatory notes of the 1950 edition, which help the reader to find his bearings in fin-de-siècle Vienna. Perhaps the reason is that he decided to use much of his space to continue his own particular quarrel with Freud, which has already received abundant publicity in two earlier books. Clearly, Mr. Masson belongs to the new breed of manager-editors who do rather more managing than editing.

At the beginning of this correspondence, Freud was thirty-one years old. The seventeen years during which these letters were written mark the period in which the young *Dozent* moved gradually from clinical neurology to the study of psychopathology and established his—as yet precarious—therapeutic practice in the Berggasse in Vienna. During this time Freud ceased to collaborate with Josef Breuer (co-author of *Studies on Hysteria,* 1895) and abandoned the use of cocaine and hypnotic suggestion; he developed the cathartic method of "free association," began his prolonged self-analysis (1897), and published *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904). A year later, in 1905, he wrote and then abandoned a "Project for a Scientific Psychology," his most speculative attempt at constructing a general theory of the mind—"a sort of economy of . . . normal mental processes"—to provide a foil against which to set his investigations into psychopathology; and in 1896 he used the term *psychoanalysis* for the first time.

Most of the concepts and procedures of Freudian doctrine are mentioned in this correspondence. Chief among them are the mechanism of the unconscious; childhood memories and their repression; anxiety neurosis in its relation to libido and the psychogenetic function of sexuality; the interpretations of Oedipus and Hamlet; the validation of "significant slips" and dreams—in short, what is set in train here is the doctrine's central "scientific" undertaking, the elimination of random elements from the life of the mind. As yet missing is the notorious self-validating device (according to which every attack on the doctrine is unmasked as guilty defense), "the death wish," and the psychoanalytical interpretation of cultural and aesthetic phenomena.

Freud's ideas make their appearance in these letters mostly as rough-and-ready speculative notes (though based "on the most solid foundation you can imagine," he wrote on

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January 3, 1897), as abstractions, and as *brouillons,* rather than in the systematic form they receive in the published works. The volume is thus of consuming interest to the historian of what is still the Western world's most influential psychological doctrine. (However, the letters do not explain that influence: they contain no hints of the eventual institutionalization of Freudian doctrine in canon, guild, and Weltanschauung, which is the source of that influence.) The old question whether the main motive of Freud's investigations was therapeutic or scientific is answered in favor of the latter—his patients are to him first a source of observation and new knowledge, secondly a source of income, and thirdly persons whose sufferings are to be alleviated. In any event, Freud's views about which mental disturbances are curable and which are not change a good deal, though the "analytical" approach does not. For example, one notes that in Freud's reading of *Oedipus Rex* the motive of the passionate pursuit of knowledge is not even mentioned.

The letters, of course, are full of complaints about the entrenched prejudices and outright hostility with which Freud's writings and his treatment of patients were received by the medical establishment. (A colleague is quoted as writing: "This kind of thing cannot possibly lead to anything but simply dreadful 'old wives' psychiatry.'") But there are also hints, couched in irony, that Freud anticipated future fame: "Do you suppose," he writes on June 12, 1900, "that someday one will read on a marble tablet on this house: 'Here, on 24 July 1895, the secret of the dream was revealed to Dr. Sigm. Freud'?" A plaque was in fact placed there in 1977, though more in the service of tourism than of *Wissenschaft.* When Freud was granted the title (though not the salary) of a university professor—an honor resulting from some typically Viennese machinations involving a patient who was the wife of a high civil servant and her timely gift of a picture—he wrote (March 11, 1902):

> Public acclaim was immense. Congratulations and flowers already are pouring in, as though the role of sexuality has suddenly been recognized by His Majesty [the Emperor Franz Joseph], the significance of the dream certified by the Council of Ministers, and the necessity of a psychoanalytic treatment of hysteria, carried by a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

Readers interested in Freud's life, too, will find in these letters a good many details to round out the portrait presented in the first volume of Ernest Jones's biography. The cares of the Jewish-family father with his everlasting financial worries ("Mrs. M. will be welcome, if she brings money and patience with her, we shall do a nice analysis"—January 24, 1895) alternate with indefatigable accounts of Alpine family holidays and culturally improving trips to Italy. Attacks of migraine, hypochondria, and depression are reported, and so are the protracted and hopeless battles of the inveterate cigar smoker. Freud's own sexual life is mentioned in half a sentence. All these not infrequently tedious bits and pieces of Freud's daily life contain little that is really new. What they show is the vulnerability of the man, though emphatically not the vulnerability of his faith in his doctrine. The letters also make plain that he was not loath to boast of the cost—in deprivations and mental energy—of his achievement. In this as in so many other ways, including his hatred of Vienna, Freud was a Viennese intellectual to the core.

The portrait of Wilhelm Fliess, who was two years Freud's junior, must be pieced together from Freud's unending though perfunctory attempts to interest himself in Fliess's beliefs and experiments. At the center of Fliess's speculations looms the Nose with its diverse spots, which are said to locate and determine various bodily functions. Freud appears to give some credence to this view, for it figures in some of his remarks. When Fliess nearly killed a female patient on whom he operated by leaving "at least half a meter of gauze" up her nose (March 8, 1895), Freud went out of his way to absolve Fliess from any responsibility, gradually convincing himself and his correspondent that her bleeding was hysterical in origin. (Similarly, on another occasion mentioned in a letter dated April 4, 1900, Freud diagnosed a patient suffering from cancer of the stomach as a case of paranoia.)

The weird and wonderful world of unbridled materialistic speculation opens before the reader of these letters. With his "organological" theories Fliess claimed to have established links between masturbation, left-handedness, male menstruation in cycles of twenty-three (or is it twenty-eight?) days, and

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homosexuality—the agent determining these connections being, of course, the Nose and its "organic" spots. When Fliess tells the sad tale of the lady "whose exquisite beauty was on everybody's lips" and who came to a bad end because she cut the cloth for her "beautifully fitting gown" with her *left* hand, this reviewer confesses to being reduced to a fit of nervous (though no doubt significant) giggles. It is hard to tell which of these "discoveries" are to be taken seriously. The same is true of Freud's own observations, which, intermingled here with the sometimes wild observations of Fliess, do not always appear in their best light.

Unsurprisingly, the friendship between Fliess and Freud breaks up because of priorities: Freud forgets to tell a patient that the theory of bisexuality is Fliess's "intellectual property." The patient—later a practicing pupil—mentions the idea to Otto Weininger, who promptly constructs around it the first part of his notorious book, *Geschlecht und Character (Sex and Character,* 1903), and, when charged with plagiarism, commits suicide. Mr. Masson's comment that "posterity will be more inclined to admit [Freud's] honesty in this awkward situation" appears to take no account of Freud's later attempt to fudge the issue.

At the height of their last quarrel, Fliess accused Freud of "reading his own thoughts into other people," an accusation about which Freud rightly observes (August 7, 1901) that it "renders all my efforts valueless." A reader who hopes to find a refutation of that accusation in the present volume will look in vain.

Ancestor Worship

SAMURAI AND SILK: A JAPANESE AND AMERICAN HERITAGE. *By Haru Matsukata Reischauer. Harvard University Press. $20.*

Reviewed by DONNA RIFKIND

Curiosity about her heritage, writes Haru Matsukata Reischauer, led her to examine the past world of her two grandfathers. Her years of research disclose that each man, in different ways, was determined to affect his country's future. Mrs. Reischauer meets her readers somewhere between that past and that future, chronicling the details of her grandfathers' lives in this double biography; fortunately for those readers, both men were noteworthy personalities. But this is not merely a history of two lives. Mrs. Reischauer's repeatedly expressed desire to promote Japanese-American concord makes the book something of a diplomatic goodwill project. This comes as no surprise, knowing as we do that her husband, Edwin O. Reischauer, was formerly U. S. ambassador to Japan. Despite the book's rather obvious program, however, the individuals around which that program operates are themselves complex and inherently interesting.

Haru Reischauer's paternal grandfather, Matsukata Masayoshi, was the more eminent of her two biographical subjects. Born a samurai in the southern Satsuma region in 1835, he spent his boyhood learning the traditional samurai code of behavior, which included the display of respect toward one's elders, the study of military arts and traditional texts, and skill in swordsmanship. The chapter entitled "A Samurai Boyhood" explains in exuberant detail how Matsukata's early education prepared him to become a leader in the Meiji Restoration and in Japan's subsequent development into a modern nation. As one might expect, Mrs. Reischauer recounts childhood incidents in a manner that seems nearly hagiographical in its eagerness to provide a suitable background for a national hero. At one point, an extremely high-ranking samurai remarked of Matsukata, " 'If this clever boy doesn't go in the wrong direction, he will some day become a man of great distinction.' " At thirteen, lacking the money to study *kendo* (fencing) with the rest of his companions, Matsukata was accused of eavesdropping on the class through a window. He challenged the accuser to a fencing match, "thoroughly whipped" the older boy, and was rewarded with free lessons from the properly impressed fencing master.

Matsukata's world was threatened with major changes by the time he turned eighteen. Commander Perry's ships had arrived by this time, forcing Japan to open itself to alien Western contact. The Tokugawa ruling structure, effective for two-and-a-half centuries,

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was losing its strength. Matsukata had a right-time-right-place advantage in seeking to profit from these circumstances, since samurai from Satsuma and the competing region of Choshu had been foes of the Tokugawa government for hundreds of years, and were eager to exert military strength to support the growing movement against the shogun. Here Matsukata began to fulfill his promised distinction, becoming first a representative of the feudal Satsuma government, then an official of the imperial administration that succeeded the collapsed Tokugawa regime. He later served intermittently as finance minister and twice as prime minister in modern Japan's unsteady early years.

Mrs. Reischauer points out, significantly, that the Meiji Restoration, while undeniably a dramatic change, was accomplished with relatively little use of force. It was the intention of the new leaders to encourage the redevelopment of traditional values, rather than to impose entirely new ones upon a reluctant country; this was, in fact, more of a reactionary movement for their part than a revolution (that the Meiji coup was translated as a "restoration" is important). The tension between the Meiji leaders' preference to look to the past for guidance and their obligation to look to the future for innovative governing methods is a theme Mrs. Reischauer explores throughout the first half of the book.

Matsukata's career shows good examples of the tension between past and future. In his role as *genro* (elder statesman), he became one of the firmest conservatives in the administration. Yet his actions as finance minister were progressive in the extreme; the financial program he established, having first curbed the nation's initially crushing inflation, became the foundation for a pattern of swift and immensely profitable development. Nevertheless, the man who initiated this modern system maintained throughout his life many of the austere samurai habits he had been taught to respect as a boy—he paid his bills daily, kept meticulous private and public records, and had a stoic, taciturn manner—and as an elder statesman he warned strongly against proposals for more radical foreign and domestic policies. However, as Mrs. Reischauer shows, Matsukata's caution was not always convincing enough to restrain his younger

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colleagues' rash actions. A notable example is the administration's proposal in 1915 of the offensive Twenty-One Demands to extend Japan's economic position in Manchuria and other parts of China. Matsukata opposed the demands from the beginning, but the government did not withdraw them until a powerful international protest arose.

Besides introducing a financial system that would ensure the stability necessary for economic growth, Matsukata encouraged broader popular education, initiated reforestation projects, and urged the development of trade with the West. Mrs. Reischauer does not leave the impression that he was as effective as prime minister as he was in his role as finance minister, but she does show how nearly impossible the tasks of the first prime ministers were by listing the number of times that post was handed back and forth between the members of the government.

When he died in 1924, Matsukata was given a state funeral according to the Shinto rituals reserved for high courtiers (Japanese funerals were at that time most commonly Buddhist). He had been the last surviving member of the original *genro* of the Meiji period; had seen Japan change from an isolated agrarian land to a nation prepared to borrow from and compete with the progress of the United States and Europe; and had indeed been influential in the course of that change. Eleven sons and five daughters survived him, and his grandchildren's generation would number more than fifty. As Mrs. Reischauer presents him, he was an impressive and absolutely unrepresentative Japanese man.

In its careful veneration, this portrait of Matsukata is a rather touching memorial, consistent with the traditional Japanese virtue of displaying respect toward one's elders. It also establishes a personal connection between the author and a man she barely remembered as a child. Perhaps because she must rely on documentation rather than on memory, Mrs. Reischauer tells Matsukata's story in an orderly, rather mechanical way: what he learned as a boy contributed to his success as a young man, which led him to become a great statesman, and so on. As biography, this measured presentation works well enough, if at times a bit too neatly and stiffly. When Mrs. Reischauer tries to apply the same cause-and-effect technique to Japanese history, however, the complex issues fail to fall elegantly into her constructed pattern. One is aware that she tiptoes over some rough details in a deliberate effort to promote friendliness between Japan and the rest of the world, rather than attempting a thorough examination of Japan's problems both within its own boundaries and in its confrontations with other countries.

One wonders, for example, at the vagueness with which Mrs. Reischauer describes the events leading to the United States's "nonrecognition" policy toward Japan's conquest of Manchuria in 1931 and the subsequent conflicts that led to war between America and Japan. Even those who are unfamiliar with these events would no doubt guess that the situation was more complex than that of a faction of "militaristic, expansionist radicals" in Japan who endangered relations with the West. Mrs. Reischauer uses great care and little vagueness, on the other hand, to explain ways in which Americans and Japanese have been able to benefit one another, most notably in the example of her maternal grandfather, Arai Rioichiro, a businessman who was equally comfortable in both countries.

Arai, twenty years younger than Matsukata, was born into a wealthy peasant family that did not enjoy samurai status (Matsukata, conversely, was a samurai raised in comparative poverty). Arai's family manufactured silk and lived in a territory under direct Tokugawa rule, which was socially and economically more advanced than the strictly feudal Satsuma. Mrs. Reischauer explains that Arai, not having been fortunate enough to be born among those Japanese who opposed the shogun, could not therefore hope to find success with the shifting political mood of the time. He looked instead for prosperity in private business, spending most of his life in the United States as an importer of Japanese silk.

The book's anecdotes about Arai's childhood are as legend-like as those Mrs. Reischauer provides of Matsukata's early years. When a famine struck in 1867 and riots erupted throughout the countryside, Arai's father organized a military force and went with his son "in traditional armor and helmet and riding a black horse" to urge neighboring villagers to help them stop the rebellion. "When he encountered the rioters, [he] quickly routed the unruly mob, taking many

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of them prisoner and confining them in a nearby Buddhist temple." In the vivid manner with which Mrs. Reischauer recounts it, this little tale has much of the filmic lyricism of the choreographed battle scenes in Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*. There was drama to be found in the silk trade as well: "No one who has heard the sound will ever forget the low, all-night roar created by the munching of thousands of voracious silkworms in a Japanese mountain farmhouse."

Arai's training in business was a somewhat less stirring experience than Matsukata's training as a samurai. He learned English and the techniques of the silk trade simultaneously while an adolescent. At the time, silk was a chief Japanese export, and new reeling machines were arriving from the West, along with Swiss technicians, who helped to turn silk manufacturing into an extremely profitable industry. For further training, Arai studied at the first commercial school established in Japan that was not financed by the Meiji government. In 1949, this school became Hitotsubashi University, today Japan's leading university for the study of economics and business.

Arai traveled in 1876 with a group of young businessmen to New York to establish himself as an importer. It was agreed that Chotaro, his older brother and partner, would remain in Japan to manufacture the silk and send it across the Pacific. Mrs. Reischauer provides a charming view of Arai's New York, which he loved despite the fact that other immigrants thought he was Chinese (the Chinese were hated for their willingness to work long hours for low pay). The young importer did not easily win the confidence of the American businessmen with whom he traded, but a high demand for silk and a concurrent blight in Europe helped him, claims Mrs. Reischauer, as did his own reputation for reliability.

Arai participated in the first direct shipment of Japanese silk by Japanese merchants in the United States without the customary use of Western middlemen, who frequently managed to appropriate all of the profits. From there, he built a hugely successful company and became a prominent member of New York society, joining the Lotus and Manhattan clubs and the Japan Society. He worked throughout his adult life to establish social ties between Japan and America; he also introduced golf, for which he had a passion, to his Japanese friends on his many visits home. In 1912, his daughter Miyo married Matsukata Shokuma (a younger son of the statesman), and the couple went to live in Japan, where Haru Reischauer was born. Miyo, however, raised an essentially American family and passed on her pride in having a double heritage to her children.

In 1922, following a deflationary period during which silk prices fell sharply, Arai's company became an affiliate of Mitsubishi. The next year, the great Kanto earthquake and a resulting fire destroyed two thousand bales of Arai's silk. World War II effectively ended the era of Japanese dominance in the silk industry, halting completely all Japanese-American trade. When trade resumed after the war, silk was no longer in demand, having been replaced by nylon and other less expensive synthetic fibers.

After a leisurely retirement, Arai died in 1939 at age eighty-four, weakened from a chill he had caught during a golf game. He was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery; the ceremony was Christian Science, since he, his wife, and his daughter had some years before converted to that religion.

Mrs. Reischauer completes the book with brief portraits of some of her grandfathers' more interesting descendants. These mini-biographies allow her to extend the book's chronology, since the deaths of Matsukata and Arai both occurred before World War II. It is in this section that one encounters the author's rather glossy version of the events leading to war between the United States and Japan. Here one learns, too, of Matsukata Kojiro, Masayoshi's third son, an industrialist who operated a profitable shipyard, imported Soviet oil into Japan, and owned a huge collection of Western art, a portion of which now hangs in the national gallery in Tokyo known as the Matsukata Museum.

Another son, Saburo, was a Marxist as a young adult who abandoned politics in later life to concentrate on mountain climbing, journalism, leadership in the Boy Scouts, and gourmet food. To Mrs. Reischauer, "he was no nation builder like his father. . . . He typified all that is best in the egalitarian society of contemporary Japan." At this point one begins to feel as though the author's praise follows somewhat random criteria; she has spent

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many pages congratulating her grandfather for being extraordinary (which he was), and now bestows what seems to be equivalent distinction on his son, who was (and one believes her) thoroughly ordinary, "one of the people."

The book's last portrait introduces Mrs. Reischauer's maternal cousin, Nobu, a foreign ministry official who became chief of the International Trade Bureau of MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry). In later years he returned to the foreign ministry and was appointed ambassador to Canada, and then, in 1967, he became the Japanese ambassador to Washington. At the book's end, Mrs. Reischauer writes of this cousin:

> He was a model "salary man," as the typical office worker is called. His accomplishments contributed significantly to the fruition of the dreams of my two grandfathers. The uncertain and sometimes timid internationalism of my grandfathers attained full maturity in Nobu's easy participation in world affairs. With my two grandfathers I started back in the feudal age of the Tokugawa shoguns. With Nobu I have reached what Japan is today.

From shoguns to MITI is indeed a long way to travel, and Mrs. Reischauer has taken her readers through some exciting territory. But while her congratulations for her family's accomplishments are undoubtedly well deserved, I am not convinced that credit is due in equal degree to the progress of Japan's internationalism; this seems more a point of enthusiastically wishful thinking than of fact. Both the past and the future are somewhat idealized in this book, both having been generated from Mrs. Reischauer's rosy perspective of Japan's relations with the world as an almost unqualified success story. But of course two extraordinary grandfathers cannot themselves cause a nation to be economically, politically, or diplomatically successful, and Mrs. Reischauer's relatives were far from typical men. That they were unrepresentative makes them good subjects for biography, but one cannot claim that they give one a great deal of knowledge about the "typical" Japanese mind, nor do they explain the complex historical and cultural factors that have made Japan the nation that it is today. Mrs. Reischauer's tendency to present these men as champions of Japan's peaceful internationalist policies propels the book forward in a manner that, though thoroughly well intentioned, maneuvers so carefully and pointedly that her good intentions threaten to exhaust themselves. One is left in the end with admiration, but also with a desire to see these men more in the context of their complicated world and less as the diplomatic superstars of Mrs. Reischauer's imagination.

One of the book's most interesting features is its author's apparent adherence to a blend of Japanese and American values—the result, one feels certain, of Mrs. Reischauer's lifelong sense of belonging to two cultures. The author so clearly believes in the importance of individual success, which Americans consider vital, as well as in the cultivation of an individual's knowledge of his or her proper behavior within a group, which is central to Japanese culture, that at the book's conclusion one understands the intensely personal nature of Mrs. Reischauer's campaign to promote Japanese-American concord: in a sense, the integrity of her personality depends upon it. Knowing this, one is less likely in the end to criticize the book for the obviousness of its intent, and one is rather satisfied to regard it with admiration for its stately prose and for its competence as a work of biography. These qualities make it a fine tribute to the author's worthy relatives.

First Columnist

PUBLIC PHILOSOPHER: SELECTED LETTERS OF WALTER LIPPMANN. *Edited by John Morton Blum. Ticknor & Fields. $29.95.*

Reviewed by PAUL ROAZEN

It is not unusual for the reputation of a writer to go into a slump shortly after his death. When Walter Lippmann died in 1974, he had been retired from his widely syndicated column "Today and Tomorrow" since 1967; a handful of his many books were still in print, and the reading public could be expected to remember both the unusual lucidity of his prose as well as the broad scope of thinking that his journalism reflected. Louis Au-

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chincloss, his literary executor, wrote a novel about Lippmann, *The House of the Prophet*, which was a remarkable account of the workings of a political thinker's mind; it remains the most successful re-creation of Lippmann that we have, particularly moving in its depiction of the deterioration of a powerful intellect in his last months. Yet *The House of the Prophet* sold unusually poorly, did not appear in paperback, and is not even mentioned in the excellent notes to John Morton Blum's edition of these selected letters of Walter Lippmann.

A temporary sag in Lippmann's public standing was transformed into a solid downward reappraisal with the appearance of the widely heralded authorized biography by Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (1980). Steel's unspoken antipathy to his biographical subject took multiple forms: instead of seeing Lippmann as a precocious young man who immediately impressed such thinkers as Graham Wallas, George Santayana, William James, and Justice Oliver W. Holmes, Jr., Steel alleged social climbing; he constructed a virtual scorecard that tallied occasions when Lippmann was right on public policy, offset by where he went wrong; Steel seemed to relish the details of the way Lippmann escaped regular military service in World War I; Steel emphasized the scandal of Lippmann's second marriage to his best friend's wife; and Steel placed an uncharitable interpretation on Lippmann's anti-Zionism, as well as his whole relationship to his Jewishness.

Even if one puts aside biographical questions that presumably might be decided in Steel's favor, it is undeniable that the official biography seriously distorted Lippmann's contribution by underestimating the value and significance of the books Lippmann wrote. For example, Steel's huge biography conceded that Lippmann's *Public Opinion* was a "great work . . . probably his most enduring," yet gave that text the attention of only a few pages. Steel, himself a journalist, interpreted Lippmann's career by his practical political involvements. But, in 1973, when Steel asked Lippmann whether he considered the writing of books or the writing of journalism the more important, Lippmann replied: "I

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considered books the more important thing." In contrast to his biography, an appreciative 1974 obituary by Steel had correctly maintained: "Lippmann once described himself as a man who led two lives, one of books and one of newspapers. It was the combination that made him unique and gave him his unparalleled voice of authority."

John Morton Blum lauds Steel's biography in his preface to *Public Philosopher,* saying that he could have cited it "twice as often." Yet, in the course of over six hundred large pages of Lippmann's letters, Blum's conscientious notes refer to Steel's biography less than two dozen times. Robert O. Anthony, who was responsible for setting up the collection of Lippmann's papers at Yale University, has claimed that Blum edited out of Steel's early draft of the biography a number of diminishing remarks about Lippmann, preventing the book from becoming an even greater betrayal of Lippmann's trust than it in fact was.

Steel has, for the sake of this edition of Lippmann's letters, shared with Blum the notes and transcripts used in the biography of Lippmann. Yet Blum's extensive introduction to *Public Philosopher* not only makes no mention of Steel but concentrates on the side of Lippmann that Steel had neglected—the books. Blum treats Lippmann as an intellectual historian should, by accounting for the structure, antecedents, and influence of Lippmann's ideas. Blum appreciates that Lippmann was a political theorist as well as a columnist, and his introduction emphasizes a few key texts in Lippmann's output: *A Preface to Politics* (1913), *Public Opinion* (1922), *The Phantom Public* (1925), *The Method of Freedom* (1934), *The Good Society* (1937), *U.S. Foreign Policy* (1943), *U.S. War Aims* (1944), and *Essays in the Public Philosophy* (1955). Blum utters not a word of criticism of Steel's biography, yet his whole introduction emphasizes a side to Lippmann's work that should help restore his intellectual standing. The argument of other of Lippmann's books would also be worth considering; *A Preface to Morals* (1929), for example, was a remarkable achievement, even if Steel is right in proposing that its origins can be found in the breakdown of Lippmann's first marriage.

For those interested in twentieth-century American politics, these letters make fascinating reading. Lippmann's comments about public figures and world issues are always noteworthy, even if he was fallible. Lippmann was involved with Woodrow Wilson's administration, disillusioned by the Treaty of Versailles, and scathing about the Republicans in the 1920s; he detested Mussolini, was extraordinarily prescient about Charles de Gaulle, and, at the same time, could be notoriously wide of the mark about Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom he called "a kind of amiable boy scout" not to be recommended to become the Democratic candidate for the presidency.

Blum has done an almost impeccable job of identifying people and issues that come up in the course of Lippmann's correspondence, much of it to the great and the famous. One notable lapse, however, is Blum's acceptance without comment of Lippmann's false belief that Sigmund Freud had reviewed *A Preface to Politics.* Lippmann did once visit Freud in Vienna, but the author of the review of that early book of Lippmann's was in fact Freud's own future biographer, Ernest Jones.

Although some of Lippmann's letters are particularly interesting, he was not a master letter writer like Freud. (Blum, to be sure, excluded "intimate" as well as routine letters from this volume.) Readers with special interests will single out different items for praise. There is a fine 1922 letter on the teaching of English in New York public schools; and a strong letter to Marcus Hannah's daughter, who Lippmann thought—without rancor—had so debased her campaign for the Senate that he told her she was not worthy of election. His Harvard classmate John Reed once sent Lippmann an accusatory letter; portions of Lippmann's 1916 reply are, I think, memorable:

> I continued to believe in you even though many times I have felt that you had acted like a fool or a cad. . . . I watched you at college when a few of us were taking our chances. I saw you trying to climb into clubs and hang on to social position by your eyelids, and to tell you the truth I have never taken your radicalism seriously. You are no more dangerous to the capitalist class in this country than a romantic guerrilla fighter. . . . I got into this fight long before you ever knew it existed and you will find that I am in it long after you quit.

Plenty of the greatest political theorists have been actively concerned with following practical politics; Machiavelli would have un-

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derstood Lippmann's career, although not perhaps why Lippmann felt able to decline high public office. Yet it is because of Lippmann's full stature that Blum's selection of letters remains somehow disappointing. He has chosen for publication from among twenty thousand letters. But only a passing familiarity with the full body of Lippmann's letters at Yale indicates that what might have been included in this volume would have made it more actively a part of the life of the mind. For example, with all Lippmann's concern for the problems that the conduct of foreign policy poses for democracy, Lippmann's contact with the political scientist Hans Morgenthau should certainly have been included. Any remarks by Lippmann about books would have been welcome. When Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote to Lippmann for comments about an introduction he had drafted for an edition of Herbert Croly's *Promise of American Life*, Lippmann's answer to Schlesinger showed an awareness of his own limitations as a scholar, even though Lippmann had worked with Croly at the *New Republic* for years. I certainly think that space should somehow have been found for Learned Hand's altogether remarkable letter on Lippmann's *Phantom Public*, a book that Lippmann had dedicated to Hand. And Lippmann not only wrote to McGeorge Bundy on the immediate political issues that are included in *Public Philosopher*, but Lippmann had earlier requested and received Bundy's help on a proposed revision of *The Good Society*. This selection from Lippmann's letters does not contain enough that touches on the themes in his books, and therefore Blum's narrowly political principle of selection seems to have been at odds with the character of his own introduction to *Public Philosopher*.

Lippmann's career was unique in American history. He started out an enthusiastic follower of Theodore Roosevelt and ended up in a feud against Lyndon Johnson over the conduct of the war in Southeast Asia. Although Lippmann became doubtful about the capacity of democracy to survive under the complicated conditions of twentieth-century life, he devoted his journalistic talents to the democratic ideal of purifying the news for the public's consumption. He remained troubled by the inability of a modern electorate to secure the needed information on which to act

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rationally. Lippmann's was a disciplined life, a rare example of someone who did not waste his talents. These letters enrich our understanding of one of the most interesting political thinkers in American history.

Phallible Thinker

THE ORIGINALITY OF THE AVANT-GARDE AND OTHER MODERNIST MYTHS. *By Rosalind E. Krauss. MIT. $19.95. Paper, $9.95.*

Reviewed by ROGER KIMBALL

For anyone interested in the influence that structuralist and post-structuralist literary theory has had on the practice of contemporary art criticism and art history, there can be no more exemplary document than *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Rosalind Krauss's most recent collection of essays on modern art, sculpture, and photography. A co-founder (with Annette Michelson) and co-editor of *October* magazine, Miss Krauss is considered in some quarters to be one of the most important art critics of the last decade. She is professor of art at Hunter College at the City University of New York, the recipient of many honors, and her writings, teaching, and editorial proclivities have exerted a tremendous influence on much contemporary art criticism, helping to shape the substance and style of the work of many students and younger art critics.

Written over the last decade or so, most of the fifteen essays collected in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* have appeared previously in one form or another. Some were written as catalog essays to accompany exhibitions; two appeared in specialized art journals; and eight were first published in *October*. All of them exhibit a staunchly post-structuralist point of view. It is worth noting at the outset, however, that Miss Krauss has not always championed the cause of structuralism and post-structuralism. Indeed, when she made her debut as an art critic—largely in the pages of *Artforum*—she espoused a brand of formalist criticism that was derived chiefly from the writings of Clement Greenberg and was thoroughly opposed to the tenets of structuralism. At that time, in the sixties, Greenberg's formalist approach to art was at the height of fashion; and so, at that time, Miss Krauss was a formalist.

But intellectual fashion is a fickle thing. As the seventies unfolded, formalism became less and less à la mode. It ceded that distinction to an agglomerate of theories from the Continent, especially from France: structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and their numerous hybrids gradually emerged to take the place of formalist criticism as intellectually "avant-garde." And now that structuralism and its heirs occupy the stage of fashion, we find that Rosalind Krauss, too, is a structuralist.

As befits her current allegiance, Miss Krauss has divided her new book into two parts, "Modernist Myths" and "Toward Postmodernism." In the former, she deals with such topics as the motif of the grid in modern art, nineteenth-century photography and the question of genre, and the surrealistic photography of Man Ray, André Breton, Florence Henri, André Kertész, and others. The first part of the book also includes essays that discuss the work of Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Julio González, and the title essay, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," which focuses on the work of Auguste Rodin in order to raise questions about the notion of originality in modernist art. The problem of originality is further mooted in "Sincerely Yours," a mordant reply to a criticism of "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" by Professor Albert Elsen, the organizer of the National Gallery of Art's Rodin Rediscovered show that provided the occasion for Miss Krauss's essay on Rodin. One notes in passing that Miss Krauss's interests have increasingly shifted away from painting to photography and cast sculpture, which tend to be reproducible in a way that painting is not and so lend themselves much more readily to structuralist analysis.

The second half of *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, "Toward Postmodernism," begins with "Notes on the Index," in two parts, which consist of loosely knit, yet highly abstract, reflections on the function of representation in the visual arts. The journey toward postmodernism continues with essays on

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Jackson Pollock, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra, and the "environmental sculpture" of artists like Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Alice Aycock, and others. The book concludes with "Poststructuralism and the Paraliterary," a brief essay in which Miss Krauss defends the rise of structuralist and post-structuralist criticism in literary studies; in this essay, she champions especially the effort "to blur the distinction between literature and criticism" and to view literature as being primarily "'about' its own strategies of construction, its own linguistic operations."

But while this inventory may be said to sum up the topics represented in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, it gives only an inadequate idea of the book's main theme and its underlying sensibility. Readers who turn to the book in search of critical insight into the announced array of artists and topics are bound to be disappointed. For what we are offered is not criticism in any traditional sense but a chic, structuralist-inspired species of *meta-criticism*—"criticism," that is to say, concerned more with the motions of its own practice than with the phenomena it purports to treat. The art or artists under discussion serve merely as the excuse, the occasion for critical lucubration. "[M]ethod," Miss Krauss suggests early in the book, "is what criticism is, seriously, read for"—a statement that ineluctably provokes the question: What, seriously, does one read *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* for? Not, I'm afraid, for criticism of Jackson Pollock, Richard Serra, Auguste Rodin, or any other of the artists or art movements named in her essays.

On the contrary, it soon becomes clear that the real key to Miss Krauss's book lies not in its individual essays, but in the manifesto that she contributed as an introduction. Here she makes explicit the intellectual program and governing assumptions that inform and give coherence to the various essays. In essence, one finds that Miss Krauss wishes to discredit the traditional, "value-oriented" approach to criticism, proposing in its place a brand of "discourse" that could dispense with the whole question of value judgments and concentrate instead on abstract notions of critical methodology. Rather than attempting to discriminate between better and worse, then, critics would occupy themselves with quasi-epistemological questions of method.

Not surprisingly, the locus classicus of the view that Miss Krauss opposes is Clement Greenberg's collection of essays, *Art and Culture*, which was first published in 1961 and has exercised a deep influence on a whole generation of critics. According to Miss Krauss, the chief sin committed by Greenberg (under whose influence, incidentally, she wrote a distinctly Greenbergian thesis on the sculptor David Smith when she was at Harvard) is that his criticism is "profoundly historicist." Among other things, being "historicist" means assuming that a subject's history provides an important clue to its meaning—that, for example, it behooves us to study the history of art if we want to understand the meaning of art. In addition, the "historicist" criticism perpetrated by Greenberg and others is guilty of supposing that such categories as "author," "work of art," "oeuvre"—and even venerable categories like "masterpiece" and "genius"—have an intelligible meaning and can be illuminating in discussions of art. In other words, such criticism begins by assuming that works of art are typically created by particular individuals who are more or less gifted and whose works can be judged to be more or less successful. It follows that in Greenberg's view, as Miss Krauss complains, "criticism has everything to do with value and almost nothing to do with method." And she is quite right in asserting that "practically everything in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* stands in contradiction to this position."

More broadly, though, what *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* stands in contradiction to is the entire legacy of modernist art and modernist criticism. The emphasis upon individual creativity, the seriousness with which art and indeed the entire realm of high culture were regarded, the faith in the spiritually enriching potential of art, even, or rather especially, in a secular age—all this is fundamental to the modernist ethos. And it is all systematically castigated by the author of *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*. "[B]y now," Miss Krauss assures us in her essay "Grids," "we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention *art* and *spirit* in the same sentence."

At bottom, Miss Krauss's rebellion against modernism is the rebellion of a disappointed enthusiast. She, like so many others, had seen modernism as a handmaiden of radical poli-

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tics. The problem is that modernism's affirmation of individuality and high culture turned out to be thoroughly incompatible with the dream of radical social transformation. Yet it was precisely upon that dream that modernism's credentials as "avant-garde" had to a large extent depended. When it became clear that modernism was not acting to realize that dream, it had to be stripped of its avant-garde status and exposed as an agent of reaction. Noting at the end of her title essay that "the historical period that the avant-garde shared with modernism is over," Miss Krauss urges upon us "a demythologizing criticism and a truly postmodernist art, both of them acting now to void the basic propositions of modernism, to liquidate them by exposing their fictitious condition."

For anyone familiar with the academic fashion these days, it will come as no surprise that the emphasis on "method" with which Miss Krauss hopes to "void the basic propositions of modernism" derives primarily from structuralist and post-structuralist theory. A central tenet of such theories is that a historical approach to phenomena is otiose and, further, that the "myth" of individual creativity must give way to a recognition of the anonymous promptings of language itself. Whatever the subject under discussion—be it philosophy, literature, art, or even history itself—it must be viewed "synchronically" (that is, ahistorically) as a system of essentially self-contained, interrelated signs; the world is recast as "text" to be interpreted.

Such theories have their home in a murky crossroads between Continental linguistic philosophy, certain species of literary criticism, and academic Marxism. The critical amalgam that results from this potpourri has proven itself wonderfully adaptable to all manner of subjects, including, of course, art criticism. Miss Krauss herself would seem to have been particularly influenced by the writings of the French critic Roland Barthes, though the influence of Jacques Derrida's skeptical theory of language and Walter Benjamin's ubiquitous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" are also manifest influences on her work. In any case, having perfected a portentous, quasi-philosophical style of writing, she has proven herself a master of the genre. In fact, in order to appreciate the appeal that her work has for her peers, it is important to understand that she presents it as having revolutionary epistemological implications. Throughout her essays there is a great deal of talk about novel forms of "generating meaning," transgressive "structural logics," and the like.

Furthermore, like so much of the fashionable literary criticism that she admires, Miss Krauss's essays display a fascination with abnormal eroticism. Never mind that the eroticism is typically of a purely verbal or purely visual nature—that only makes it easier to enlist it in the service of the critical game. Fetishism, the collapse of gender differences, sadism, and masochism are themes that recur again and again in her work. For example, in "No More Play," an essay that originally appeared in the Museum of Modern Art's catalog for its notoriously ill-conceived 1984 exhibition on primitivism in twentieth-century art, Miss Krauss admiringly quotes a scholar who writes that, for Georges Bataille, "Self-mutilation demands to be thought of as an act, in fact *the* pictorial act *par excellence*. Because painting is nothing if it doesn't strike at the architecture of the human body." In that same essay, discussing Alberto Giacometti's "Suspended Ball," Miss Krauss explains:

> This round phallicism, this collapse of distinction between what is properly masculine and what is properly feminine, this obliteration of difference, is for logic what perversions are for eroticism: it is transgressive. As Bataille explains, . . . [the mission of words like *informe* is] to strip away the "mathematical frockcoats" that philosophy drapes over everything. . . . *Informe* denotes what alteration produces, the reduction of meaning or value, not by contradiction—which would be dialectical—but by putrefaction: the puncturing of the limits around the term, the reduction to the sameness of the cadaver, which is transgressive. Round phallicism is a destruction of meaning/being.

"Phallicism," as it happens, is often on Miss Krauss's mind; indeed, she seems to be able to discover it just about anywhere. In the "Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," for example, she meditates on the phallicism implicit in two photographs: a self-portrait by Florence Henri and Man Ray's "Monument to de Sade," a photograph of a woman's buttocks upon which is superimposed the outline of an inverted cross. (Somehow, it is not surprising that surrealism, with its adolescent glee in the sexually bizarre, has figured so prominently in

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Miss Krauss's repertoire of topics.) But more remarkable than the discovery of "phallicism" where it exists only by dint of ingenious hermeneutical imputation are the conclusions that Miss Krauss draws from her discovery. According to her, for example, the phallicism that is said to be implicit "in the whole photographic enterprise of framing and thereby capturing a subject . . . can be generalized way beyond the specifics of sexual imagery to a structural logic." Among much else, then, Miss Krauss would have us believe that photography is itself an act of sexual conquest, that composing an object in the viewfinder and clicking the shutter are somehow analogous to sexual intercourse.

Naturally, this peculiar fusion of logos and eros, of an abstruse philosophical argot and a fascination with sexual perversion, has substantially added to the cachet that Miss Krauss's work enjoys. But considered as *art* criticism—as criticism that seeks to determine the artistic or aesthetic significance of what it treats—her writing has little to offer. And considered as a contribution to epistemology—well, Miss Krauss's only contribution to epistemology consists in pretending that one could overturn the law of non-contradiction by proclaiming "*X* = *not-X*" over and over again in a particularly unpleasant manner. The truth is that her talk about the "generation of meaning," trangressive "structural logics," the "destruction of meaning/being," and all the other inflated phrases with which she bestrews her text are little more than intellectual window dressing; what Miss Krauss purveys is not epistemology but a thirdhand version of structuralism that multiplies the absurdities of the original while losing whatever stimulating novelty the original may have possessed.

One could spend a great deal of time pointing out the questionable and even patently false assertions in which *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* abounds. For example, in her title essay, Miss Krauss tells us that the idea of originality as "absolute self-creation . . . functions as a model for what is meant by originality among the early twentieth-century avant-garde." But is this so? What about Paul Klee? He likens the artist to a tree trunk that does "nothing other than gather and pass on what comes to him from the depths. He neither serves nor rules—he transmits."

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Or think of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in which T. S. Eliot writes, "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." Hardly instances of "absolute self-creation," these.

But it would be useless to enumerate the dubious claims made in this book. For, in the end, what makes *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* so discouraging—and what makes it a kind of specimen text of its ilk—is not so much its extravagant interpretations, though surely those are discouraging enough, but its utter indifference to the life of art. The idea that art might move, might refresh, might enlighten us never occurs in these pages—and how could it, when the entire book is presented as an abstract meditation on critical "method"?

In *The Oxford English Dictionary* we read that a "critic" is "one skilful in judging of the qualities and merits of literary or artistic works," and hence that criticism in this sense is "the art of estimating the qualities and character of literary or artistic work." And of course this is more or less the definition of criticism we typically follow and the one that serious critics have always embraced. Miss Krauss has chosen to provide us with a new meaning for the terms *critic* and *criticism*. But far from enhancing their competence, she has merely deafened herself to the high calling they had once represented.

Bombs Away

THE IVORY TOWER. *By Anthony Kenny. Basil Blackwell. $24.95.*

Reviewed by D. C. STOVE

Mr. Anthony Kenny is an English philosopher who is also Master of Balliol College, Oxford. This book is, as its subtitle says, a collection of his "Essays in Philosophy and Public Policy." The essays fall into two groups. The first is about murder, and certain related concepts, in British law. These essays are sensible but, obviously, not of wide interest, and I will say no more about them. The second group is about nuclear war. These essays are of wide interest, but not sensible.

Kenny believes that Britain should unilaterally renounce her nuclear arms. But he is neither a pacifist nor an apostle of Communism. In fact, he wants Britain to strengthen her conventional forces.

This is scarcely a practicable policy. It is hardly in human nature to settle for inferior weapons and throw away your most formidable ones when your enemy does nothing of the kind. To destroy your rifles while the enemy keeps his, and to stockpile spears instead—what sort of mental state would you have to be in to do *that?* It is one so unusual, at any rate, that it can be safely left out of political calculations. No, the only time that people will unilaterally give up their most formidable weapons is when they are bent on giving up *all* their weapons. In other words, Kenny's policy amounts in practice to pacifism, whatever he may intend.

But if his policy were to be adopted, it is easy to see what the consequence would be. Britain has many enemies, and it is not hard to acquire nuclear weapons; and, to any enemy so armed, Britain would then offer the same temptation as Japan did to America in 1945. Is it likely that her enemies would always resist that temptation? To ask this question is to answer it.

These objections are so very obvious that Kenny cannot have been unaware of them, and so serious that he ought to have tried to answer them. But he does not. Here is a representative specimen of what he offers instead. "The worst-case outcome of deterrence, nuclear devastation, is so much more catastrophic than the worst-case outcome of disarmament, Russian domination, that the course which leads to it should be avoided no matter what the probabilities of the two outcomes on the different strategies" (p. 115).

For impudent falsity, this will take some beating. The worst possible outcome of disarmament is, quite obviously, *not* Russian domination, but the same as the worst possible outcome of deterrence—namely, nuclear devastation, by the Russians or by someone else.

The same obvious untruth is repeated when Kenny discusses the old question whether it is better to be "red or dead." Common sense would suggest that the West has succeeded

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for forty years in avoiding *both* these dreaded alternatives and that this is some reason to believe that we have been doing something right and may even be able to continue avoiding both alternatives. But of course this is not at all the way Kenny sees things. "For our nations to be reduced to the status of Romania would be far less of a disaster than for all our cities to be reduced to the condition of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945." This is from page 90, but almost exactly the same sentence, with the same reference to Romania, occurs again on page 115. In fact, this obvious untruth—that the "Romanian solution" is the worst possible outcome of disarmament—is a recurring theme of these essays and the author's pet delusion.

Orwell observed long ago—and indeed it is not hard to detect—that the emotional fuel of pacifism is actually a secret admiration for superior military strength. It is likewise not hard to detect in Kenny's delusion a secret yearning for that very Russian embrace that he believes he dreads. The Romanian solution is not really, in his mind, a second best. On the contrary, like many other British intellectuals, he has been mentally living in Romania for decades.

But what are the *arguments* (as distinct from the wish) behind Kenny's policy? *Why*, according to him, should Britain throw away her nuclear arms? The first argument that Kenny gives is this: that the use of nuclear weapons would kill millions of innocent people and thereby "violate an *absolute divine* prohibition" (p. 67), "the *divine command* against killing the innocent" (p. 68).

There now, that took you back a bit, didn't it? As well it might. But I should explain that these quotations come from an essay that, though reprinted here, was first published as long ago as 1962. At that time Kenny was a Catholic and presumably took divine commands seriously. He is not a Catholic now, and in the introduction (page 2) he hints that he himself does not now subscribe to this particular argument. Still, this has not stopped him from trotting it out, twenty-three years on, for the sake of whatever influence it might still be able to exert. This is a strong instance of the vanity of authors at least. Whether it is not also an instance of something like pious fraud it would be unsympathetic to inquire.

His second argument is an appeal to "the principle, basic to European morality since its enunciation by Socrates, that it is better to undergo wrong than to do wrong." (This is from page 116, and is repeated elsewhere.)

"Basic to European morality since Socrates" forsooth! This is just cheek, of course, and an attempt to invest one's own crotchets with the authority of all history. It is very much in the manner of an earlier Master of Balliol, the omniscient Benjamin Jowett, and this kind of thing may even now, for all I know, do to bluff Oxford undergraduates. It will not do here, though, because, first, the principle stated is quite obviously *not* basic to European morality. Second, if it were, that would not even begin to show that it is a good principle. Third, it is obviously not a good principle. (It is of course a perfectly good *pacifist* principle, or at least its special case applied to warfare is; but then, Kenny says he is not a pacifist.)

Kenny's main argument for disarmament, however, is just the following very simple one: that to use, or even possess, weapons for the mass destruction of the innocent, is *immoral, wicked*. This he says from the outset, and this is what he comes back to, using these very words, time after time in these essays.

Sancta simplicitas! At least, I hope that that is what this is. Yet it is hard to believe that so accomplished a philosopher as Kenny does not know the elementary logical truth—namely, that "we ought not to do X" does not follow from "X is immoral." The reason why it does not follow is that there can be "choice-of-evils" cases: cases, that is, in which (1) we ought to do something, (2) doing X is immoral, and (3) doing anything else is at least as immoral as doing X. That such cases are at any rate *logically* possible, no one, perhaps, will deny. That they are not only possible but actual, and indeed common, is something that even a modest experience of life suffices to teach most people. And that the case of nuclear weapons *is* a choice-of-evils case seems to me to be a truth so obvious that even a philosopher might have been expected to see it.

Until philosophers are kings, Plato said, human affairs will never go right. This is true; only one should add that they never go more wrong than when philosophers are kings. Historical accidents fortunately spared mankind the world rule to which Plato, Comte, and countless other philosopher-megalomaniacs

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aspired. But our luck ran out at last. In 1917 the throne of the Russian Empire was successfully usurped by a philosopher—with what catastrophic consequences for the world at large it is hardly necessary to state.

Kenny is not, of course, one of the philosophers who aspire to world rule. But he shares the unerringly disastrous political impulses of those who do. I do not believe that, if you took at random twenty common men from English streets, you would find one whose opinions on the momentous subject of nuclear weapons are as silly, or as dangerous, as those of the respected philosopher who wrote this book.

The Ex-Arcadians

THE ILLUSTRATED ZULEIKA DOBSON. *By Max Beerbohm. Yale University Press. $19.95.*

Reviewed by MARY LAGO

Never again will the traveler to Oxford stand on the very spot where that "ebon pillar of tradition," the Warden of Judas, stood awaiting Zuleika Dobson. The "grey eternal walls of that antique station" have, alas, been replaced by the overgrown toolbox that British Rail deems appropriate to modernity. The old station, Max Beerbohm told us, "does yet whisper to the tourist the last enchantments of the Middle Age." The modern station neither whispers nor enchants, and tourists, the like of whom the Warden never imagined, throng the platform, which trembles as high-speed diesels thunder past. Worse yet, within recent years the Sheldonian Emperors have been given new heads; heat and frost, rain and wind had worn many of their features flat.

The older scene, the slower pace of life, the high value placed upon grace and graciousness, always had the greater attraction for Max. "Oh, give me legends, fairly recent legends, all the time!" he wrote to William Rothenstein in 1942. "Thank Heaven, we ourselves have a legendary touch about us! We are ex-Arcadians, greatly envied by the young." In *Zuleika Dobson*, Max created a recent legend, set in Edwardian Oxford, harking back to Regency dandyism, and using fantasy to frame an event that utterly mortifies both. Zuleika's name, in fact, serves notice that a pairing of fantasy and reality is promised: *Zuleika* suggests mysteries of harems and veiled ladies; *Dobson* is solid British plebeian. But Zuleika is anything but veiled, and British reality, explicit and implicit, will break in. Miss Dobson is a self-made young woman, the orphaned daughter of a circus rider and an obscure clergyman (another pairing of fantasy and reality). Her paternal grandfather, Warden of Judas College, disapproved of the marriage and cast Zuleika out into a career as a governess, spectacularly unsuccessful because the employers' grown sons invariably fell in love with her. One of them showed her his box of parlor tricks, which she stole, and with them began her truly spectacular international career as an entertainer and as a collector of diamonds and similar valuables, all thrust upon her by would-be suitors. She rejects the hearts that accompany the diamonds and resolves upon a fairy-tale stratagem: she will give her heart only to that great novelty, the man impervious to her charms.

She finds him, she thinks, in the Duke of Dorset, Oxford's nonpareil undergraduate, when her grandfather relents and invites her to visit Oxford. The Duke ignores her and, to her own surprise, she falls in love for a few minutes, but his pearl shirt studs betray him: one turns pink, the other black, to match her pearl earrings. Consequently she insults him, and he, having previously decided to drown himself for love on the last Boat Race day—all the other undergraduates having resolved to join him for the same reason—must now keep his vow, not for Zuleika but for noblesse oblige, and also because the gods on Olympus have already dispatched the two black owls that always forecast the death of a Duke of Dorset. While drowning, he bumps the Magdalen boat, which consequently fails to bump Judas, whose victory is pyrrhic since all the crews join all the other victims in the river. The one exception is the miserable Noaks, who hides out of cowardice but meets his fate in another fashion, also attributable to Zuleika. She, after considering taking the (Anglican) veil, prepares for an assault on Cambridge.

Zuleika Dobson is Max Beerbohm's only novel, begun in 1899, when his own Oxford

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experience was still fresh, and resumed in 1910 after he had married Florence Kahn and settled in Rapallo. He visited London in March 1911, already feeling out of touch, to see the controversial Postimpressionist exhibition in order to caricature it for his own forthcoming exhibition at the Leicester Galleries. Rothenstein found him "in many ways changed, wonderfully well and deeply happy and devoted to his wife, hating London and its ways and disapproving of things he was far from squeamish about years ago." In August, he wrote to Will: "I am really very glad I found it impossible to go on writing the book in London years ago. I have developed since then; and the book wouldn't have had the quality it has now. It really is rather a beautiful piece of work—though it may be a dead failure in point of 'sales'—and on the other hand might sell quite well: just a toss up." He told Reggie Turner the same and added: "The early part is good; but the later is better—stronger and suppler (unberufen!)." In October 1911 he wrote to Turner of his satisfaction in having "really done it just as well as it possibly *could* be done by *me*." Upon publication in November he told Turner that he had wanted the characters to "*behave like* real people, within the limits of the absurdity conditioned. I wanted to forge the links of logic correctly *from my* premises . . . by taking the characters solemnly—the fun of the absurdity would be by contrast the greater." If he had "over-shot the mark" there was "the more chance of abiding in people's minds, as something to be worried about, something rather baffling."

There *was* something baffling about it, but of a sort different from what Max envisioned. It was all the more worrisome to contemporary critics because his caricatures always hit the mark dead center. *The Academy* did not find the later part better than the first and thought that the pace faltered after the first hundred pages; essays and short parodies were his best prose forms, and "we leave Mr. Beerbohm with a faint, rebellious feeling akin to disappointment"—feelings never applicable to his shorter prose. *The Saturday Review*, whose "incomparable Max" he had been from 1898 to 1910, commented that although he could never be dull, the "humour which bubbles so naturally in the first pages becomes a little gelid as the book proceeds."

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It seemed to have been in progress for a long time, begun lightly, continued in "hopeful travail," and "finished in a spirit of grim determination."

In *Zuleika Dobson* Max laughs at himself, at his characters, and at the reader until the joke wears thin. "Indeed, the book is an example of the way in which a form tyrannises over the artist who has mastered it." Max was the master of the short essay, and "when he handles a larger form he is tempted merely to pile on the details instead of enlarging the scale." *The Athenaeum* wanted more gaiety, less whimsy. *The Nation* found the satire clever, even brilliant, but remote. *The Spectator* found Max's characters diverting, amusing, but they "never appeal to the intimate humanity of the reader. Mr. Beerbohm can play all sorts of games with our intellect, but fails to touch our heartstrings." It is a mark of Max's critical standing that almost everyone, then and now, who gives *Zuleika Dobson* qualified praise feels compelled to apologize for doing so.

The premise is unescapable that the smaller, neater package—and what could be neater than Max's caricatures?—was Max's better vehicle. He had not lost that touch in 1911, for in 1916 he spoofed so brilliantly in "Enoch Soames" that a modern bibliographer was spoofed into listing the fictional Enoch's fictional diary among bona fide diaries. But in *Zuleika Dobson* the narrative *does* falter, certainly at page 178, when Zuleika has just doused the Duke with the contents of her water pitcher, and Max digresses for two chapters of fantasia, one on the Muse Clio's interest in this affair; and one on his own aerial survey of Oxford by night as her servant, a wonderful entr'acte but an interruption to the narrative. The Duke, in love (at least, as he understands love) under Zuleika's window in the moonlight, does touch our heartstrings a little. He seems almost on the brink of becoming human, and he is reassuringly human as he sniffles and sneezes two chapters later. But those two intervening chapters make it difficult to get back into the spirit of the contest between Zuleika and the Duke. That appealing strain of humanity returns most convincingly with the refreshingly down-to-earth Clarence and Mrs. Batch, and with Katie's expanded role. Somehow, the balance between reality and fantasy was not quite properly adjusted.

Zuleika Dobson is more than a jeu d'esprit—although it is certainly that. Joseph Stein, writing in the *Dalhousie Review* in 1975, suggests that it is a well-disguised polemic directed at the New Woman. Zuleika is an activist, brash and pushy, and Max disliked active women. Stein writes: "What is most pleasing to Max about the old-fashioned woman is that she refrained from action." He wanted women to be intelligent but felt that "repose was necessary for the nurture of feminine grace and intelligence."

That is an interesting notion of Stein's, and the facts of Max's daily life support it. He liked to be cared for, his surroundings to be kept reposeful, but of course this was not accomplished without someone's being active. Florence Beerbohm had the knack of creating such an environment, together with the illusion that it was all done without effort. Her fifteen-year-old niece Alexandra, who stayed with the Beerbohms for nine months in 1921–22, very quickly saw through this. She wrote to her parents, Florence's brother and sister-in-law:

> We had a funny argument at dinner tonight. Uncle Max was saying that he needed so little attention. I told him that he thought *that* because a great deal of attention had always been lavished on him in the most unostentatious way possible. Thereupon a great argument ensued at the end of which Aunt Florence and I were in gales of laughter for Uncle Max really believed what he said and maintained to the end that he was the most independent man alive. . . . Every single solitary thing from the breakfast hour to the consistency of the pudding, has to be regulated for Uncle Max. He never has to "lift a hand" and all his wishes and wants are mysteriously anticipated.

In fact, his was a ducal manner of existence. Florence was not quite a New Woman, but she was a very active one. She did not pursue dukes, but when she visited her American relations she vigorously negotiated Max's business with agents and publishers. She traveled alone all over Italy—architecture was her passion—while Max stayed behind. But Alexandra found Florence old-fashioned in matters such as the wearing of gloves and greetings to neighbors in the streets, and Florence, who had had a stage career before she married Max, kept her domestic and pub-

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lic activities carefully out of Max's sight.

Zuleika, however, respects no one's sensibilities, least of all the Duke's. The novel's subtitle is "An Oxford Love Story," but it is in fact the account of a battle in the war of the sexes. Ellen Moers suggests, in her study of the dandy tradition, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, that that battle, "rather than aesthetic principles and foreign thought, was the central issue of the 'nineties, reflected in changing legislation, in shifting fashions of costume and even furniture, and of course in the literature of the period." Max himself had had one of the last words on dandyism, in his essay "Dandies and Dandies," in 1896, on the dandy as artist. Beau Brummell had succeeded because he aimed for utter simplicity of dress, "the production of the supreme effect through means the least extravagant." D'Orsay failed because much of his costume was "merely showy or eccentric." Brummell was the "single-minded artist" who "turned full and square towards his art and looked life straight in the face out of the corners of his eyes." Zuleika's challenge makes the Duke forget delicacy, repose, and art to such an extent that instead of striving to produce "the supreme effect through means the least extravagant," he goes to the opposite extreme and tries for maximum effect by wearing his Garter robes inappropriately.

On the other hand, that New Woman Zuleika has a case, even though she makes it so ungraciously. Condescendingly, the Duke offers her his titles, tenants, and properties, assuming that he is irresistible. She tells him off: he is not only a snob; he is "with the possible exception of a Mr. Edelweiss, *the* most awful snob" she has ever met. Being bracketed with Mr. Edelweiss is bad enough, but he is reminded that marriage to her would be a shocking misalliance. He excuses her, condescendingly, for she had evidently "felt that the high sphere from which he beckoned was no place for the likes of her." But she is busy demolishing his Victorian assumptions. She intends to marry for love, not for security; she is not flirting, but means what she says; she likes herself as she is and does not intend to revise herself merely to be a duchess. In other words, she is a militant New Woman.

Shaw's essay "Valedictory" had welcomed Max to *The Saturday Review* in 1898; as Shaw goes out, "there steps sprightly in the incomparable Max." *Zuleika Dobson* is Max's valedictory for the brave tradition of the dandy, which he manages to uphold only by fleeing to Italy, where he can afford the life of repose. Zuleika is all too sprightly; she is also comparable, for there are more and more like her. Max balances uneasily between old and new, disliking the demise of the one, half admiring yet distrusting the other. How to create a new work of art, combining the best of both, he failed to tell us.

Eighty original drawings that Max inserted in his special copy embellish this new edition. They are a delight. Some are the playful "improvements" that he loved to make in his own (and sometimes in his friends') books. One of them certainly improves the list of Mr. Heinemann's current novels, among them such titles as *Maid's Money*, by Mrs. Henry Dudeney, and *Mrs. Drummond's Vocation*, by Mark Ryce. Max has given the list a frame, with himself gesturing graciously toward it and saying, "But perhaps you would rather read one of these?" Zuleika herself adorns the half-title page, and *she* is "looking the world straight in the face out of the corners of [her] eyes," which are enormous and almond-shaped, with deeply hooded lids, not unlike Max's own. On the title page is Max again, dapper and a-tiptoe, lighting the torch of Melpomene, the tragic muse, whose tragic-mask face, with eyebrows raised in alarm, looks the embodiment of apprehension. That increases as he hustles her along in other vignettes spaced throughout the book, until at the end he extinguishes her torch while she makes her exit with an expression of utmost consternation—as well she may.

Max has illustrated his authorial conjectures as well as events in the story. He remarks that the orphaned Zuleika "would have looked singular in one of those lowly double-files of straw-bonnets and drab cloaks which are so steadying a feature of our social system." He then draws her, "tall and lissom," gleaming in flamingo silk and emeralds, as one in a double file of drab, squat, and identically nondescript orphans. Some of the interpolated drawings are clues to what was in his mind as he wrote. The "gutteral compliments" for Zuleika's magic-tricks performance (which, Max tells us, is less than mediocre) are certainly from Edward VII, whose features in the marginal drawing on page 16 are those of the Prince of

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Wales in Max's "Edwardyssey" series. Noaks, peering through large spectacles, looks all too much like Will Rothenstein, his shortness of stature much exaggerated, as in Max's drawing of the New English Art Club. The Rhodes scholar, Abimelech V. Oover (whose American idiom Max gets very wrong—perhaps intentionally, since his disdain for Americans was well known) looks like an alarmingly inflated Herbert Hoover.

Undoubtedly reality asserts itself, however, first and last. The endpapers are the photograph of the Sheldonian, with its Emperors unrestored, that Max pasted into his copy as endpaper. And because he disliked the printer's font, he pasted over their imprint the bit of railway schedule from Oxford to Bletchley, ostensibly from Zuleika's gem-encrusted copy of Bradshaw's railway guide. This confirms, uncannily, E. M. Forster's admonition to Max in a 1942 letter about S. R. Roberts's *Zuleika in Cambridge*. "I told you *years and years ago* what happened to her," Forster wrote, "and you have never listened to me: she was shunted into a siding at Bletchley." Perhaps she is there still, an ex-Arcadian in spite of herself, while the Newer Women pass her by.

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

Ike and I

In Kenneth Davis's interesting article "Ike and I" (Winter 1985/86), I was surprised to find this statement on page 72: "Indeed, Joe McCarthy would probably not have won reelection that year [1952] in Wisconsin (by a mere five-thousand-vote margin) if Ike had not deleted from his Milwaukee speech, upon McCarthy's demand, his praise of Marshall. . . ." My memory told me that the Senator had won by more than 5,000 votes. I checked and found that I was right. Thomas Reeves in *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy* gives these figures: McCarthy 870,444 to Fairchild's 731,402. (Admittedly, of 11 Republicans on the ticket, McCarthy did *least* well, but his margin was nevertheless close to 140,000.)

Why the mistake? A possible explanation is that Mr. Davis was thinking of the 1946 Republican primary race when McCarthy defeated incumbent Senator Robert La Follette, Jr., by 207,935 votes to 202,557. In *that* case, the margin was very close to the 5,000 figure cited.

BERNARD SINSHEIMER
University of Maryland

KENNETH S. DAVIS replies: Professor Sinsheimer is correct, of course, and I wholly mistaken.

When writing history one should never place sole reliance upon one's memory for "facts"—and in the present instance my memory would have been at once exposed as false (I would not even have had to look up the statistics) if I had paid any critical attention whatever to what I was saying. Obviously, the Eisenhower I knew, and was portraying in my essay, would never have made the sacrifice he made of Marshall's friendship, and of the respect of myriads, to an expediency that didn't exist, or that was even at all doubtful. It was precisely *because* McCarthy's political potency was recognized as great in Wisconsin, as it was elsewhere in the nation, and was deemed a political asset by the Republican Party's cynical leadership, that Ike did as he did.

What he did increased the potency of McCarthyism, of course, and by a good deal; it could not but have increased the margin of McCarthy's reelection victory; but I doubt that this bothered Ike very much, if at all, in 1952.

My thanks to Professor Sinsheimer for setting the record straight, and my sincere apologies to the readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

Mexico's Children

I can't understand how Richard Rodriguez ("Mexico's Children," Spring 1986) cloaks himself with an aura of authority by his use of that absurd term *Mexican-American*.

As one of the founding members of the short-lived National Chicano Media Council in 1970, I feel I must respond to Mr. Rodriguez's inaccurate assumptions about the word *Chicano*.

Since the end of the Mexican War there has been a systematic denigration of the word *Mexican* in this country. The media usually uses code words or outright attacks, such as "illegal alien" (Mexican). Other words used to ostracize and stigmatize the Mexican are "gangs" (propensity for crime), "Mexican Mafia," "Mexican corruption," "Mexican fruit fly" (why not Spanish fly or Hispanic fly?).

Eventually this gave *Mexican* a pejorative connotation, thus denying us our legitimacy as citizens of this country. Then we were further stigmatized with that ridiculous name *Mexican-American*.

When an oppressed class, as the Mexican, flounders in incoherence through his emasculated speech, discovery of a means for survival becomes paramount.

The most obvious method was to reach within our own group for a survival language, sort of a semi-coherent English and fragmented Spanish. Standard spanish was spoken by our parents in the home, but among second-generation Mexicans raised in America, there developed a slang, a substandard dialect such as the word *Chicano*. For better or for worse *Chicano* became a useful tool when our civil rights struggle started to gain steam in the cities.

Eventually *Chicano* was to become synonymous with *Mexican* much like *Yankee* is for *American*.

Naturally the older generation objected, with justification, to seeing the Spanish they were trying to preserve become bastardized. However, between the choice of illiterate speech and no speech (incoherence) we chose some elements from our own jargon.

This coinage gave us a legitimacy that dominant society refused us. Hence, by reinventing ourselves (giving ourselves our own identity) we could now make our own history and create our own myths and legends. In a word, we could deal on our own terms with dominant society, rather than react as marionettes to their manipulation under periodic revi-

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sions of confusing names.

To be brutally frank, the stigma *Mexican-American* is related in effect to the Jewish people being compelled to wear the Star of David under the Third Reich.

ANDY AGUILAR
Glendale, California

MR. RODRIGUEZ replies: The term *Mexican-American* is problematic, though not for the confused reasons that Mr. Aguilar advances. As Mexicans (that is, citizens of Mexico) will tell you, they are "Americans"—in a non-parochial, hemispheric sense. They are, one could thus say, Mexican-Americans.

In the United States (where we insist on appropriating "America" to ourselves), the term *Mexican-American*, like *German-American* or *Italian-American*, serves as a quick means of distinguishing one immigrant group from others. That is how I use the term, for convenience' sake.

A Little Night Teaching

I write in response to an article in the Summer 1986 issue, "A Little Night Teaching," by J. Mitchell Morse.

I am a teacher of English in a large public high school of the Borough of Queens, in New York City. Our department, as well as the others, has teachers with M.A. degrees (and not in Education, either) from the City University, Fordham, N.Y.U., Barnard, St. Joseph's, Vassar, Juilliard, University of Wisconsin, and others. Some of us have Ph.D.'s; some of us wear the ΦBK key and read the SCHOLAR with enjoyment (usually).

In his article, J. Mitchell Morse does not state the name of the benighted community that hires the incompetents he describes, but he condemns all high school teachers with a fine disregard for fairness—not to mention common sense.

Though we have long given up expecting appreciation for doing a difficult, essential, underpaid job, it had not occurred to us that we did more damage to society than burglars or car thieves or swindlers, or slightly less than drug pushers.

I must add that the author's description of his pedagogical methods makes me dubious about hiring him. No doubt the Ph.D. must be protected from the likes of bright-eyed grandmothers who think that reading great books is fun (the very point *re* poetry made by Mr. Epstein in a recent *Commentary* article), even though I question such a pusillanimous retreat from the task of giving such an eager student the dignity of a decent refusal. (And, of course, one can't help but recall that fine critic, George Lyman Kittredge, who graced Yale though minus the Ph.D.—"Who would examine me?")

On my desk is the acknowledgement of my annual donation to ΦBK, expressing gratitude for "your support of its continuing efforts to encourage intellectual excellence." Such efforts can be found, obviously, even among high school teachers; it would be pleasant to know that the editors of the SCHOLAR, unlike Mr. Morse, recognize the effects of such encouragement all around them.

ANGELA MATHEWS
Elmhurst, New York

J. MITCHELL MORSE replies: New York has at least as good a claim as any other city to be called the intellectual capital of our country. Of course it has some excellent public schools, with literate teachers. So have some other cities, large, medium, and small. Mrs. Mathews is to be congratulated on teaching in such a school; but she must know that it is atypical. The more representative schools, in New York and elsewhere, are those portrayed by literate teachers in such accounts as *Up the Down Staircase* and *The Way It Spozed to Be* (whose author inadvertently convicts himself of contributing to the demoralization).

The recent outpouring of reports on the shameful condition of our public schools need not have surprised us. The *Underground Grammarian* has been detailing the horrors for years. So have such studies as Paul Copperman's *The Literacy Hoax* and Carman Hunter's and David Harman's *Adult Illiteracy in the United States*. The Autumn issue of *Salmagundi* will carry a thoughtful article by Robert Scholes, "Aiming a Canon at the Curriculum," with comments by several other concerned citizens, including me. Everybody knows that the problem as our educationists see it is how to achieve excellence without actually teaching the kids to read. For an account of some of the sad results I refer Mrs. Mathews to a story in the August 19, 1986, *New York Times*, p. B3: "City U. Moves to Correct 'Learning Deficits' Fast." Of the eighteen thousand graduates of New York City high schools who last spring applied for admission to CUNY, ten thousand needed remedial instruction in at least one of the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The adverb "fast," if it is accurate, can only modify "moves," not "correct."

It goes without saying that the Ph.D. is no guarantee of intelligence or even of much knowledge; still, in a good university it does have standards higher than those of adult ed. The pleasures of serious graduate study are both more intense and more strenuous: they are analogous to those of climbing a mountain rather than to those of walking through a meadow.

In any case, a person who can't always write a coherent sentence in his native language, but who

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presumes to teach it and its literature, does indeed blunt the minds of the next generation. He does indeed do more harm to society than a burglar, a car thief, or a swindler, and almost as much as a drug pusher.

I will go further. A high school English teacher who barbarizes "analysis" into "analyzation," or who without any Joycean intention combines the names Charles Stewart Parnell and Stephen Dedalus to form "Stephan Parnell," or who writes "Bloom is naive yet congcience," should be ____. (Complete this sentence in twenty-five words or fewer.)

The Importance of Philip Larkin

Much as I liked John Wain's essay on Philip Larkin in the Summer 1986 SCHOLAR, I was taken aback by his interpretation of the second part of Larkin's poem *Livings*. I had read the poem a few months before, and it had never occurred to me that the speaker "obviously . . . is a steward on one of those magnificently appointed transatlantic liners." Then I arrived at the rather frantic footnote in which Wain tosses out (in jest?) the alternative suggestion that the speaker in the poem may be "an old Irishwoman working as a fortune teller." After that, I reread the poem.

Not without trepidation, I would like to propose a different interpretation, which is that the speaker is a lighthouse keeper. If you read the poem this way, then:

1. In the first verse, the speaker is up in the lighthouse, from which he sees the winter waves, "seventy feet down," burst against the rocks and, "relapsing, . . . slaver off landing stage steps." (The mussels and the limpets "in the freezing slither" naturally cling to the rocks and not, as Wain seems to think, to the bottom of a ship.)
2. In the fifth stanza, night has fallen and the lighthouse keeper's eyes follow the sweeping beam of his light. In this "stare traveling leather-black waves," snowflakes appear to swerve like moths attracted by the light ("O loose moth world"). The "stare" is at once that of the light and its keeper. (Wain's suggestion that "stare" also means "starling" strikes me as too beautiful to be good.)
3. In the sixth (last) verse, the speaker is "guarded by brilliance," i.e., literally, the brilliance of the lighthouse light. But the phrase is ironic; in the vast dark, where the winter sea runs amok and liners "grope like mad worlds westward," the sweeping beam of the lighthouse does not penetrate far. The speaker's barometer and radio (in the second and third verses) have enabled him to "see" a bit farther, but he nevertheless feels the future problematic and sets out "divining cards."

In writing all this, I am troubled by a recollection. A German magazine once published Charles Addams's famous cartoon in which two ski tracks lead to a tree, temporarily diverge to pass around it, one on either side, and then resume a parallel course down the hill. A number of readers submitted "solutions" to the "problem." I hope I am not acting likewise.

ROBERT B. KUNKEL
Maplewood, New Jersey

JOHN WAIN replies: Mr. Kunkel's comments on my interpretation of Philip Larkin's poem *Livings, II* are clearly right. The poem *is* most plausibly explained on the assumption that the "I" is a lighthouse keeper. My theory that he must be a steward on a luxury transatlantic liner simply doesn't square with a lot of details in the poem (no ship, even on those lines, is as high out of the water as "seventy feet." I was led into it by the lines "Guarded by Brilliance / I set plate and spoon / And after, divining-cards"; I imagined the man laying the tables for the passengers' slap-up dinner and then the diversions for their restful evening. In fact, of course, "plate and spoon" would be appropriate to a frugal dinner of broth, and the divining-cards might be the solace of loneliness.

When such momentous, and often dreadful, things are happening in the world it may seem frivolous to take up time arguing over the meaning of one stanza in one poem; but surely poetry, like all the imaginative arts, has its important place in the civilized life; I am glad THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR asked me to write about Larkin's poetry, and glad that Mr. Kunkel read my essay with enough attention to spot a weak point in it and was interested enough to write in about it. I am sure he is right.

Desecrating the Holy Woman

Roy A. Rappaport's "Desecrating the Holy Woman" (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Summer 1986), with its reflections on the significance of my book *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*, is a monumental essay in intellectual deviousness and in anthropological mystification. So much is this the case that nowhere in his massive article does Rap-

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paport even mention the extreme conclusion by Margaret Mead with which my book is specifically concerned.

As Mead herself has documented, she went to Samoa in 1925 "to carry out the task" given her by Franz Boas "to investigate to what extent the storm and stress of adolescence" is "biologically determined and to what extent it is modified by the culture within which adolescents are reared." In 1928, in the fourth paragraph of the thirteenth chapter of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Mead came to the conclusion (fully in accord with the then ruling ideology of American cultural anthropology) that biological variables are of no significance whatsoever in the etiology of adolescent behavior; "we cannot," she asserted, "make any explanations" in terms of the biological process of adolescence itself.

Today, as Stephen Jay Gould has noted, "every scientist . . . knows that human social behavior is a complex and indivisible mix of biological and social influences." It is thus evident, in the light of modern scientific knowledge, that Mead's conclusion could not possibly have been true in 1928, or, for that matter, at any other time, and, being contrary to nature, reason and common sense, is obviously a preposterous conclusion.

Yet, from the late 1920s onward, this conclusion of Mead's became a principal dogma of American cultural anthropology. Rappaport is in outright error in asserting that Mead's conclusion did not become an anthropological myth. In fact, Mead's mistaken conclusion was repeated in an unbroken succession of anthropological textbooks, as also in the *American Anthropologist*, the journal of the American Anthropological Association, and was taught in universities right up to the time of the publication of my refutation in 1983. Thus, the stir created by my refutation was caused not by any mystical desecration of holiness but by the realization that a demonstrable error had, over many years, been imparted to students at centers of higher learning in the U.S.A., and, indeed, throughout the world.

That Mead's preposterous conclusion is based on a series of ethnographic errors is easily demonstrated. *Coming of Age in Samoa* is principally known as a depiction of a Polynesian people among whom free lovemaking by adolescent girls is both "permitted" and "expected." Yet this depiction is at variance with the reports of all other ethnographers of Samoa. In fact, in the words of Albert Wendt, himself a Samoan, who is currently Professor of Pacific Literature at the University of the South Pacific, Samoans "forbid premarital and extramarital sex and promiscuity." Indeed, it is the very scale of the error in Mead's account that has led many Samoans to believe that she must have been duped by her informants.

Further, and most crucially, Mead's conclusion is contradicted by her own evidence. Thus, at least four of her sample of twenty-five adolescent girls were, on Mead's own evidence, delinquents. This means, as the calculation of a rate from these cases demonstrates, that in the 1920s delinquency with its attendant "storm and stress" was present among Samoan adolescent girls at as high a level as has been established for other societies, such as the U.S.A., for which delinquency rates are available. It is then quite astonishing, in view of the decisive evidence to the contrary contained in Mead's own account, that Ruth Benedict, a leading cultural anthropologist of the day, could have asserted that among Samoans the adolescent period was "quite without turmoil," and that virtually the entire anthropological establishment came to give credence to the demonstrably erroneous dogma that biological variables are of no significance whatsoever in the etiology of adolescent behavior.

Here let me note that Richard Goodman, who knows Samoa well, has, in an entirely independent study published in 1983, also presented decisive evidence of Mead's errors; while Professor G. B. Milner, the leading expert on the Samoan language who has worked in all parts of Samoa, is of the view that "Mead's Samoan field-work was a disaster and its data unreliable in the extreme." Of all these crucially pertinent facts Rappaport, in his face-saving article, makes no mention at all!

The making of mistakes is commonplace in science, as, for example, Darwin's "blunder" (as he called it) over the Parallel Roads of Glen Roy, Freud's error over sexual seduction in early childhood, and Einstein's "blunder" (as he also called it) over his cosmological constant. It is surely beyond question, however, that if science and scholarship are, in Francis Bacon's words, to "turn on the poles of truth," there can, within them, be no toleration of error.

This, however, is just not an issue for many anthropologists. Professor D. M. Schneider, a leading American anthropologist, has noted (*Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1983) that "sure the pros have known that Mead was wrong about adolescence in Samoa." Yet, such was Mead's legendary reputation, that none of the American anthropologists having this knowledge made any attempt, prior to the appearance of my refutation in 1983, to correct Mead's preposterous conclusion of 1928.

In consequence, when my book was published uninformed anthropological dogmatists from all over the United States sought to defend Mead's outlandish conclusion. Further, at the Eighty-Second Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in 1983, my attempt to rescue the members of that Association from "the philosophic indignity of persisting unnecessarily in error" was denounced by a massive show of hands in terms reminiscent of the days of Calvin. And one young professor, expert about things Samoan, who at the

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outset had avowed that "people who work on Samoa know Margaret Mead was wrong, and Freeman's book shows that beyond doubt," not wishing to be mobbed, drastically modified his testimony! It was these and comparable happenings that in 1984 caused Richard Goodman to observe, in the *Newsletter* of the American Anthropological Association, that "something is rotten in the state of American anthropology." And now, we have Rappaport's massive essay in mystification that, despite the demonstrable errors and false conclusion of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, attempts to reinstate this book as a "humane and liberating" text!

This whole sorry sequence of events is poignantly reminiscent of that recounted by Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter in their classic *When Prophecy Fails* (1956). The analysis of these events is even more instructive, I have found, than that of the circumstances that caused Mead to come to her preposterous conclusion of 1928. I am, then, now working on a second book in which I shall deal in detail with the radically irrational reaction of members of the American Anthropological Association to the cogency of my refutation, and with the studied obfuscation of Rappaport's "Desecrating the Holy Woman." The title I have in mind for this book is *When Prophecy Failed*. A fitting epigraph for it might well be the stirring words of Franz Boas: "All that man can do for humanity is to further the *truth*, whether it be sweet or bitter."

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Professor Rappaport's lengthy grinding of Derek Freeman into the anthropological turf was instructive to this lay reader, although I found its title misleading. "Demolishing the Unholy Antipodean" seems more apt and almost as catchy.

Even while fascinated by the Battle of Boas, I kept waiting for a resume of critical publications by those American anthropologists who were said to have early recognized the true character of *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Did they try to warn a deluded public that it was largely myth, not science? Surely the least they owed to those swallowing the story and joyfully accepting it as gospel (good news!) was such a warning. Failure in that seems irresponsible of professionals in a field as closely related to human behavior as cultural anthropology.

Perhaps most of all, one could wish that the Holy Woman Herself had felt a responsibility to caution her vast public, supposing that as she matured she recognized the misleading nature of her juvenilia. She must have seen her book becoming the beacon for hordes of youth leaping gleefully on what seemed the scientific promise and justification of adolescent adjustment through sex-on-demand. She played a leading role, as this observer sees it, in creating a tragic illusion that has made adolescence more traumatic, and far more costly to society, than it was in the days of sexual restraint. "Humane" and "liberating" seem ill-chosen words to describe the Mead Myth.

But regardless of how one interprets the social consequences of the widespread public acceptance of her myth, I wonder whether we laymen can hope that the lesson she has taught will persuade more anthropologists than Freeman, and more promptly, to speak out when they discover that their work, or that of a colleague, presented as science, turns out to be myth. Clearly, such revelations are even more important to society when the work profoundly affects the lay public than when the matter is of concern only to those toiling in the science.

For now, the iconoclast's attack, too late to counter the damage, and even granting Rappaport's points in his damning critique, seems nonetheless a welcome stroke for the discipline of self-correction that is crucial to any science and that one would dearly hope would follow fast every myth-as-science.

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ROY A. RAPPAPORT REPLIES: Professor Freeman does no more than reiterate his disagreement with what he represents as Mead's conclusions, his contempt for her ethnographic practice and his anger at American anthropology in general and me in particular for not agreeing with him. I am accused of deviousness and mystification because nowhere in my "massive article" do I "even mention" Mead's "extreme conclusion," which he later characterizes as "preposterous." What was that conclusion? In the manner of an evangelist quoting Gospel, he tells us that in Chapter 13, paragraph 4, Mead says that

". . . biological variables are of no significance whatsoever in the etiology of adolescent behavior; 'we cannot,' she asserted, 'make any explanations' in terms of the biological process of adolescence itself."

When we ourselves check chapter and verse, however, we find that it says something quite different. Here is that paragraph in its entirety:

"But when we have answered the question we set out to answer we have not finished with the problem. A further question presents itself. If it is proved that adolescence is not necessarily a specially difficult period in a girl's life—and proved it is if we can find any society in which that is so—then what accounts for the presence of storm and stress

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in American adolescents? First we may say quite simply, that there must be something in the two civilizations to account for the difference. If the same process takes a different form in two different environments, we cannot make any explanations in terms of the process, for that is the same in both cases. But the social environment is very different and it is to that we must look for an explanation. What is there in Samoa which is absent in America and what is there in America which is absent in Samoa?"

The "same process" which takes "different form" in "different environments" is identified in paragraph one of the same chapter as ". . . the process of growth by which the girl baby becomes a grown woman." Mead assumes that the "developing girl is a constant factor in America and Samoa" and asks whether "the sudden and conspicuous bodily changes which take place at puberty" are necessarily accompanied by the sorts of emotional and cognitive upheavals common among American girls. Are conflict and stress inevitable concomitants of "change in the girl's body?"

Mead clearly recognized the biological character of puberty, never claimed that biological factors had nothing to do with behavior, and simply stated that differences in the emotional and cognitive correlates of "the same [biological] process" in "different environments" are to be accounted for by environmental differences. Hardly preposterous.

Professor Freeman adds nothing to judgments expressed in his book concerning Mead's competence as a fledgling ethnographer. In my view she didn't give us the "whole truth" about Samoa but she didn't get it all wrong either. Three related points follow.

First, there is no "whole truth" in ethnography. *No* account can tell us everything worth knowing about *any* society. Ethnographic knowledge, like historical knowledge, is derived from forever accumulating but always incomplete facts and interpretations, complimentary, supplementary, or contradictory, as in the case at hand. Apparent contradiction does not necessarily indicate error but, as I have argued, may indicate the need for deeper, more synthetic understandings.

Second, the conception of positive science animating Freeman's rejoinder as it did his book cannot be properly applied to the construction or judgment of ethnographic texts. Facts and interpretations can be in error, of course, but by denying the reality of apparent contradictions, a Popperian program of formal falsification aiming to produce unambiguously opposed judgments of "wrong" and "right" (or "not wrong") will generate more errors than it will expose.

Third, and the most important lesson in the whole affair: there may be no correlation between the continuing anthropological importance of a work and its enduring cultural significance. As ethnography, *Coming of Age in Samoa* hasn't been important for a long time. As (public) myth it was still significant in 1983, judging from the uproar following publication of Professor Freeman's book.

S. D. Cornell asks why anthropologists didn't warn "a deluded public that it was largely myth, not science." I can make only two brief suggestions in the space remaining. First, I don't think that anthropologists have been aware that a few of their texts have played a mythic role in public discourse. The mythic significance of *Coming of Age in Samoa* and Mead's publicly sanctified status were matters that escaped us until Professor Freeman forced us to reflect upon them. Second, as I tried to make clear, the contrast between myth and science is not an opposition between truth and falsehood, but a distinction between discourse directed toward the *discovery* of law and fact and discourse devoted to the *construction* of value and meaning. The two may, but need not, be complimentary. That epistemologies dedicated to the discovery of law may threaten the grounds upon which meaning and value are constructed could be at the heart of contemporary problems, but that is another matter.

Because his space was limited, Professor Freeman could not ask me to deal with two points I know exercised him.

First, in reducing my essay to (barely) publishable length, I excised reference to two publications subsequent to his book in which Professor Freeman outlined his method for calculating virginity frequency among Western Samoan girls (forty years after Mead's fieldwork). It consisted, in essence, of making inquiries of everyone it was possible to ask discreetly about everyone they knew anything about, counting as non-virgins anyone about whom any doubt was raised. This method, aside from its possibilities for generating gossip, does not seem to me capable of producing data sufficiently reliable to support a weighty argument, but I apologize to Professor Freeman for failing to mention that he had clarified this matter.

Second, Professor Freeman himself noted that eugenic thought reached its "terrible culmination in National Socialist Germany." It was not despite but because of this observation that I said that he seemed to take eugenicist racism to be a flaw in an otherwise serious science, but I emphatically did not mean to convey the impression that Professor Freeman is guilty of racism, and wish to declare my admiration for an essay in which he calls for "a *species morality* based on the recognition of the equality and dignity of all members of the species *Homo sapiens*."

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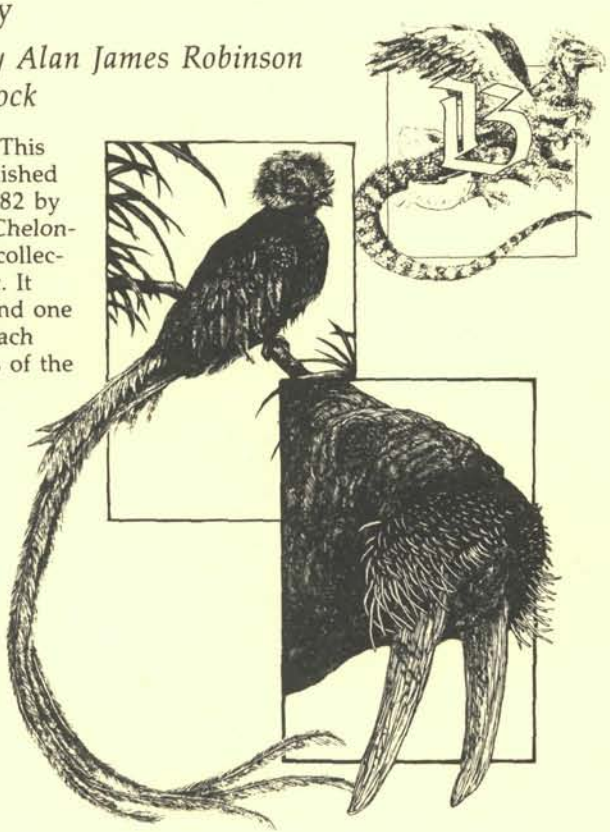

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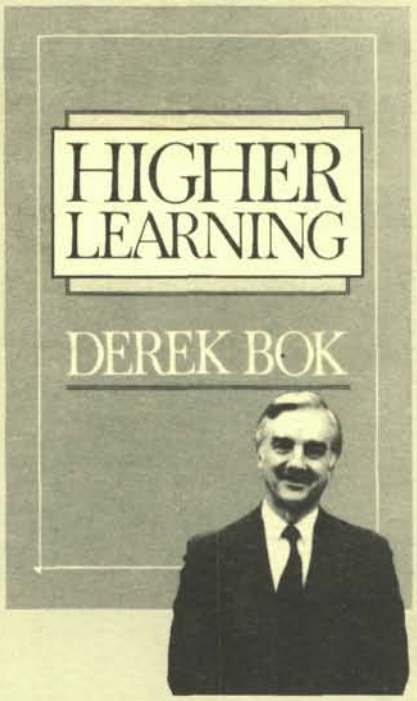

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